



FROM BIRTH TO DEATH AND BENCH TO CLINIC

THE HASTINGS CENTER BIOETHICS BRIEFING BOOK

for Journalists, Policymakers, and Campaigns

INTRODUCTION

Bioethics Matters: Introduction and How to Use This Book

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Bioethics Matters: Introduction

From Schiavo to *Sicko* to stem cells, the public is paying increased attention to bioethical issues, both to familiar concerns such as health care reform and to newer topics emerging out of biotechnology. The drumbeat of news around these topics grows louder. However, understanding too often falls prey to sound bites and polarization, and policymaking suffers. This is a risky business, as the decisions we make as a society around these issues have the potential to change how we are born, how we live, and how we die. Public policy on these issues is particularly important at this juncture. The 2008 presidential candidates have positions on abortion, cloning, health care reform, and stem cells, and Congress has introduced or is debating legislation on personalized medicine, health care reform, end-of-life care, abortion, clinical trials, nanotechnology, and torture, among other bioethics issues.

From Birth to Death and Bench to Clinic: The Hastings Center Bioethics Briefing Book for Journalists, Policymakers, and Campaigns is an effort to enhance knowledge and inform debate around these matters. The essays that follow this introduction illustrate just what is at stake for journalists and policymakers at the front lines of these critical issues. Hastings Center President Tom Murray describes the growing relevance of bioethics to public policy and the impetus for this volume; Center cofounder Dan Callahan reflects on the historical role of bioethics in policy, and its particular relevance to health care reform; and *TIME* magazine editor-at-large Nancy Gibbs encourages journalists to pave the way in a “whole new kind of conversation” about what it means to be human—one in which “bioethicists play a fateful role.”

The 36 topical entries that follow are designed to give journalists, policymakers, and political campaigns the tools they need to best write about and respond to the challenges posed by advances in medicine and science that directly affect individuals, families, and communities. This volume is grounded in the Hastings Center mantra that good ethics begins with good facts. Hence each of the entries includes a careful description of the relevant science, social science, statistics, legal history, and other research. As for the bioethical considerations at the heart of the entries: The Hastings Center methodology, refined over four decades as a way to approach often thorny ethical concerns, is

nonpartisan and multidisciplinary. It is also multi-perspective—all reasonable voices deserve to be heard, with the aim of finding, if not consensus, then at least understanding and respect.

The entries in this volume aspire to that standard. While the authors come from a range of disciplines, and from various political and moral positions, each has strived to present the full range of perspectives on a given topic. The author's position is often clear, but so are the positions of those who feel differently. The goal is to provide the *Briefing Book's* readers with a comprehensive starting place from which to write an article, seek guests for a television interview, find experts to testify in Congress, or seek the bipartisan solutions that are at the heart of our social system.

How to Use This Book

The 36 entries in *The Hastings Center Bioethics Briefing Book* are arranged alphabetically and cross-referenced within each article. The online edition is searchable and features printable pdfs. Each entry includes:

- a bulleted highlights box
- experts to contact, with phone numbers and e-mail addresses
- a resources box for further information, including Web sites, recent news stories, and further reading. Links are available online where possible.

The volume also includes an appendix of relevant legislation and an online-only campaign appendix. The resource box for each entry has an icon directing you to either appendix if there is relevant legislation or a campaign position on the topic. It is our intent to update the legislation appendix periodically online, and to revise the campaign appendix for mid-term and other elections. We welcome your feedback, both on this edition, and on future ones, at communications@thehastingscenter.org.

—Mary Crowley, Editor
*Director of Public Affairs
 and Communications*

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The Center's entire research, editorial, and communications departments pulled together and worked tirelessly to produce a volume that would prove useful to its audiences while upholding The Hastings Center's standards for scholarly and editorial excellence. Art director Nora Porter, staff writer Susan Gilbert, copyeditor Joyce Griffin, communications associate Michael Turton, and research assistants Polo Black Golde, Alison Jost, and Jacob Moses deserve special mention, as do editorial director Greg Kaebnick and president Tom Murray, for their editorial guidance. The Center also thanks its partner in Washington, D.C., the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and especially Joanne Padrón Carney, Mark Frankel, Erin Heath, and Al Teich.

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Their belief that bioethics matters to the world informs their work and is at the heart of this briefing book, and we are proud to count them as colleagues.

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—Mary Crowley