

Report of the Ethical Ideal of Service to the 1988 House of Delegates

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The purpose of this report is to draw renewed attention to the moral identity of nursing as found in the "ideal of service."

Before nursing is a science, before it is an art, it is a moral endeavor. It is guided by a central moral motif, the ideal of service, that informs all that the profession and this Association does. Our predecessors, in the 1896 articles of incorporation of the Nurses' Associated Alumnae of the United States and Canada, clearly identified the basic and ongoing professional concerns of nursing — and the centrality of ethics to that endeavor. These ANA founders tacitly acknowledged that the life of the profession hinges on its ethics.

ANA's Committee on Ethics serves not only this Association, but the whole of the profession. Though the committee's functions revolve around the interpretation of *The Code for Nurses*, its concerns extend to every aspect of the organization's activities and goals, whether clinical or social in nature.

At the clinical level, the committee seeks to explicate the *Code* and to provide guidelines for the nurse in practice. In 1988, this involves issues such as withholding and withdrawing treatment, the use of live anencephalic infants as organ donors, the refusal to care for AIDS patients, and the participation of nurses in capital punishment. In nursing research, it is ethics that specifies the morally licit limits of investigation and the manner in which scientific inquiry may be conducted; our ethics must be prior to our science.

Nursing education is also influenced by ethics. Nursing students must be socialized into the moral norms of the profession if they are to embrace its ethical obligations in order to articulate them in clinical practice. At the associational level, ethics guides and informs the priorities that the Association

sets, the goals that it seeks, and the means used to achieve those goals. In society, nursing ethics is concerned about the just allocation of resources, equitable access to health and nursing care, and the protection of the health and welfare of the socially vulnerable, disvalued, or disadvantaged. These are human rights concerns, grounded in nursing's social ethics. On a national level, special ethical attention, that of moral policy formulation, must be given to issues in policy, for such matters are never devoid of ethical dimensions.

However, the patient and society are not the only focus of professional ethics; ethics is also concerned for a just compensation and acceptable work conditions for the nurse. As the "Suggested Code of 1926" notes, self-development can best be nurtured in the soil of economic self-respect. In the end, it must be held that the nurse is worthy of the same dignity that the profession demands be accorded to the patient.

In order to serve the nurse in practice, the profession as a whole, and this Association, the committee is currently investigating numerous clinical and social issues. In this coming biennium, the committee will undertake to prepare position statements or guidelines on the following issues:

1. Proposed legalization of euthanasia by lethal medication for the terminally ill patient.
2. The use of live anencephalic infants as organ donors.
3. Withholding or withdrawing life-sustaining treatment from adult patients.
4. Withholding or withdrawing life-sustaining treatment from infants and children.
5. Revision of the statement on nurse participation in capital punishment.
6. Enhancement of the quality of health care through collegiality in nursing.

7. Responsibility of nursing administration to minimize risk to the nurse.

8. Discussion of the issues related to care for the AIDS patient, such as mandatory testing, disclosure of information, and the HIV seropositive nurse.

9. Nurse participation in violence or torture.

10. Nurse participation in media advertising.

"Doing ethics" is neither a paper-and-pencil activity, nor a matter of consensus. The work of ethics proceeds by discourse and argumentation. It entails reflection upon issues, cases, and policies in the light of the ideal of service, the ethical norms of the profession and its tradition, and the *Code for Nurses*. The work of ethics is that of critical reflection within a community of moral discourse. Nursing is a community of moral discourse.

We are moving into the 21st century carrying forward an ethics begun in the 19th century, and a moral legacy even older. Nursing's moral tradition is distinctive, distinguished, and enduring; it has been hard fought and valiantly maintained; now it must be boldly defended. It is a tradition that is responsive to the needs of both the nurse and those in need of nursing. Its ideal of service has self-reflectively and appropriately shifted from one that has been totally other-regarding to one that is other-regarding and at one and the same time professionally self-regarding. As we strive to secure an organizational structure for ANA that will allow nursing to realize its full potential, let us remember that the continuing contribution of the Association to the ethics of the profession is vital to the life of nursing and to all those whom we would serve.

We are, withal, proud to care; but even more, we are honored to serve.

Long-Time Member of MBC Receives Hastings Center Award

We are pleased to announce that Richard A. McCormick, S.J., has received the Henry Knowles Beecher Award from The Hastings Center. Father McCormick has been a member of Midwest Bioethics Center from the beginning, and now serves as Professor of Christian Ethics at the University of Notre Dame. McCormick is one of the most influential Roman Catholic moral theologians in the United States and has published extensively in the area of medical ethics. The Beecher Award is given periodically by The Hastings Center to celebrate scholars who have made distinguished lifetime contributions to ethics and the life sciences. We are proud to count Father McCormick among our Center's steady supporters.