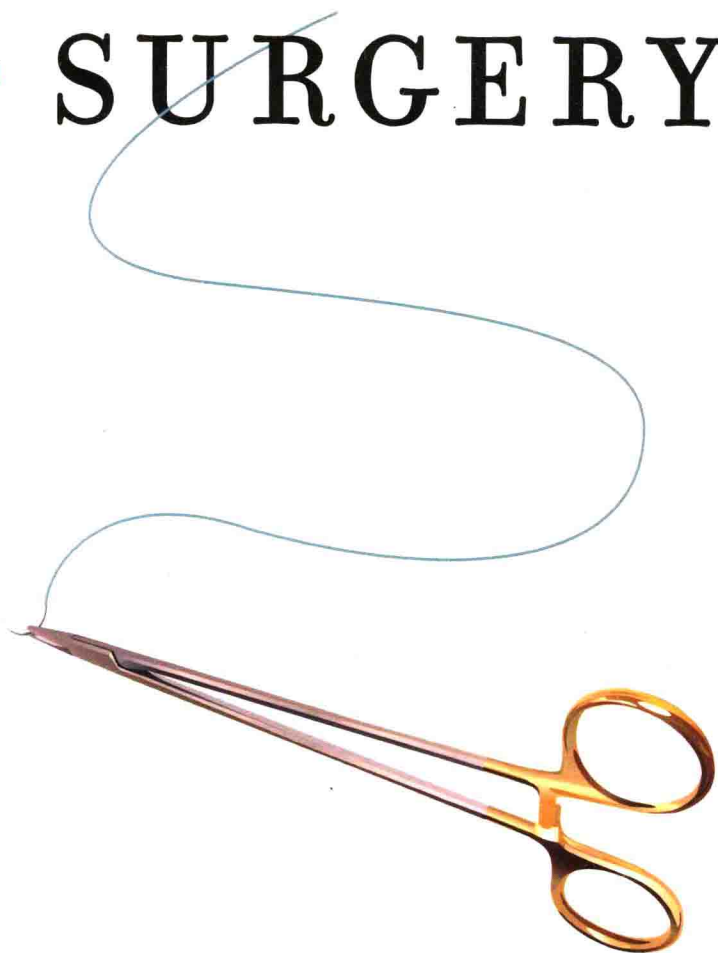


THE ETHICS OF SURGERY



Conflicts and Controversies

EDITED BY *Robert M. Sade, M.D.*

OXFORD

The Ethics of Surgery

CONFLICTS AND CONTROVERSIES

Edited By Robert M. Sade, M.D.

DEPARTMENT OF SURGERY, INSTITUTE OF HUMAN VALUES IN HEALTH
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The Ethics of Surgery

I dedicate this book to two mentors early in my professional life, who not only encouraged and supported my development as a surgeon, but also were the finest practitioners of the art and science of surgery I have known: Aldo R. Castañeda and the late M. Judah Folkman.

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PREFACE

This book was not created de novo but evolved as a consequence of the growing interest in biomedical ethics as it applies to surgery. Although it is set in the context of cardiothoracic surgery, the ideas, conflicts, and controversies that it addresses are applicable to all surgical specialties. The evolution of certain ideas and events ultimately led to the creation of the book itself.

In the mid-1990s I came across a paper that piqued my interest. It compared the frequency of discussion of bioethical issues in medical compared with surgical journals. The study found that ethical topics were discussed more than four times more frequently in medical than in surgical journals. In an attempt to identify the causes of this “ethics gap,” I conducted a pilot survey within my own institution, the Medical University of South Carolina in Charleston. Although the study provided no clear explanation for the discrepancy, its findings were of sufficient interest that it was accepted for presentation at a surgical conference in 1999. This paper, “The Ethics Gap in Surgery,” was published the next year in a surgical journal and is reproduced as the first chapter of this book. The presentation and publication of this pilot study led to two important outcomes.

Immediately after the oral presentation, I discussed the implications of the ethics gap for both surgical practice and surgical education with the newly appointed editor of the *Annals of Thoracic Surgery* (the *Annals*), Dr. L. Henry Edmunds. He considered and then accepted the idea that oral and written discussion on ethical topics in the context of surgery could be valuable. Subsequently, Hank appointed me as ethics editor of the *Annals*, the official journal of the Society of Thoracic Surgeons (STS) and the Southern Thoracic Surgical Association (STSA). This post had not existed previously. From that position, I was able to facilitate the publication of a series of articles on ethical issues in surgery, many of which are found in this book.

The second significant outcome came several months after the publication of the ethics-gap paper. Dr. Martin McKneally and I, both members of the Society of Thoracic Surgeons Standards and Ethics Committee at the time, explored the possibility of creating an organization for providing ethics education for cardiothoracic surgeons. As a result, the Ethics Forum (the Forum) was created. (The name was recently changed to the Cardiothoracic Ethics Forum, but Ethics Forum was used throughout previously published material in this book, so I use it in this book rather than the new name whenever referring to the Forum.) Martin and I invited a few surgeons who were

interested in ethics to join us, and this group subsequently met regularly to plan programs on ethical issues for presentation at national meetings of surgical societies. It gradually evolved to comprise the entire membership of the ethics committees of the STS and the American Association for Thoracic Surgery (AATS), as well as a few former members of those committees who had sustained an interest and scholarly involvement in surgical ethics.

Eventually, discussions of ethical issues became a permanent fixture in the programs of the annual meetings of the STS, the AATS, and the STSA. To expand the audience for these programs beyond those in attendance at the meetings, their proceedings were published in the *Annals* and the *Journal of Thoracic and Cardiovascular Surgery* (the *Journal*), thus reaching a readership of thousands. Some of the ethics-related writings in these journals did not originate in conference presentations but came from solicited manuscripts on ethical issues.

Between 2000 and the end of 2013, more than forty ethics programs were presented at the annual meetings of cardiothoracic surgical societies, and members of the Forum had published more than 300 articles on topics in ethics, nearly all in surgical journals, mostly in the *Annals* and the *Journal*.

I have selected articles that I have written or coauthored from the *Annals* and the *Journal*—they comprise most of this book's content—in hopes of further augmenting the educational value of the Forum's efforts by presenting them to an expanded audience of surgeons and surgical trainees. This book is not intended to cover the field of surgical ethics comprehensively; rather, it focuses on issues that have been determined by the members of the Forum (nearly all of whom are practicing surgeons) to be controversial and of current relevance to surgeons and surgeons in training.

The book has two goals. The first is to provide educational materials in surgical ethics for the enjoyment and enlightenment of practicing surgeons and other physicians, surgical residents, and medical students. The second is to make surgeons aware that ethics is not a static, stable discipline; rather, it is a dynamic field that is animated by varying perspectives on important controversies, perspectives that arise from diverse training backgrounds, from differences in personal value systems, and sometimes from fundamentally differing worldviews. If these goals are achieved, I believe that surgical practice will be better for it, to the ultimate benefit of the patients we treat.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The publication of a book is the culmination of the efforts not of one person but many. Most of the material in this book came about as a result of the collaboration of dozens of individuals. In the beginning, Martin McKneally, MD, my colleague and friend, and I germinated the idea of developing an educational program for the field of thoracic surgery. We worked together to create the Ethics Forum, members of which over the past fourteen years are listed below (records were poorly kept or missing in the early days, and I apologize to anyone in that group whom I inadvertently omitted).

From the beginning, L. Henry Edmunds, MD, editor of the *Annals of Thoracic Surgery*, was enormously helpful and supportive of the publication of much ethics-related material in his journal. Special thanks goes to Heide Pusztay, managing editor of the *Annals of Thoracic Surgery*, who has been extraordinarily effective in support of our publication efforts. The editors of the *Journal of Thoracic and Cardiovascular Surgery*, Andrew Wechsler, MD, and subsequently Lawrence Cohn, MD, have also been encouraging by publishing ethics papers in their journal. Enthusiastic support for the activities of the Forum has come from the leadership of both the Society of Thoracic Surgeons (STS) and the American Association for Thoracic Surgery, most particularly from Robert Wynbrandt, STS executive director, and Grahame Rush, the STS director of information services.

On the home front, my work over many years has benefited greatly from the support of my administrative assistants, most recently and notably Ms. Megan Fier. The Department of Surgery and Division of Cardiothoracic Surgery of my home institution, the Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC), have provided both financial and moral support over many years, in particular Fred Crawford and John Ikonomidis, both of whom I am fortunate to count as friends as well as colleagues. My move from the active practice of pediatric cardiac surgery into the field of bioethics was greatly facilitated many years ago by discussions, encouragement, and financial support from Layton McCurdy, who was dean of the MUSC college of medicine at the time.

Many thanks are due to my editor, Peter Ohlin, senior editor of Oxford University Press, for his guidance through the process of bringing the materials in this book from a nascent idea to final publication, with the assistance of Lucy Randall, Associate Editor. Stephen Hoffius was of great help in editing the final manuscript.

A huge thank-you goes to the many coauthors of the papers that compose the bulk of this work. We have learned a great deal from one another, and we have had a lot of fun putting together the talks and debates at annual surgical society meetings and carrying them through to publication. Members of the Ethics Forum are noted below. Coauthors of the essays in this book are listed in the pages following.

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