

TAKING

SIDES

Clashing Views on
Controversial Issues in
Health and Society
Third Edition

Eileen L. Daniel



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**Clashing Views on
Controversial Issues in
Health and Society**



Third Edition

Edited, Selected, and with Introductions by

Eileen L. Daniel

State University of New York College at Brockport

Dushkin/McGraw-Hill

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To Ann

Cover Art Acknowledgment

Charles Vitelli

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PREFACE

This book contains 38 articles arranged in 19 *pro* and *con* pairs. Each pair addresses a controversial issue in health and society, expressed in terms of a question in order to draw the lines of debate more clearly.

Most of the questions that are included here relate to health topics of modern concern, such as AIDS, managed health care, environmental health, and drug use and abuse. The authors of these articles take strong stands on specific issues and provide support for their positions. Although we may not agree with a particular point of view, each author clearly defines his or her stand on the issues.

This book is divided into six parts, each containing related issues. Each part opener provides a brief overview of the issues and offers several related sites on the World Wide Web, including Web addresses. Each issue is preceded by an *introduction*, which sets the stage for the debate, gives the historical background of the subject, and provides a context for the controversy. Each issue concludes with a *postscript*, which offers a summary of the debate and some concluding observations and suggests further readings on the subject. The postscript also raises further points, since most of the issues have more than two sides. At the back of the book is a listing of all the *contributors to this volume*, which gives information on the physicians, professors, journalists, and scientists whose views are debated here.

Taking Sides: Clashing Views on Controversial Issues in Health and Society is a tool to encourage critical thought on important health issues. Readers should not feel confined to the views expressed in the articles. Some readers may see important points on both sides of an issue and may construct for themselves a new and creative approach, which may incorporate the best of both sides or provide an entirely new vantage point for understanding.

Changes to this edition The third edition of *Taking Sides: Clashing Views on Controversial Issues in Health and Society* includes some important changes from the second edition. Seven completely new issues have been added: *Will Managed Care Improve Health Care in the United States?* (Issue 1); *Can Spirituality Overcome Disease?* (Issue 6); *Should Moderate Use of Alcohol Be Recommended?* (Issue 8); *Is Marijuana Dangerous and Addictive?* (Issue 9); *Are Silicone Breast Implants a Health Risk to Women?* (Issue 10); *Public Policy and Health: Is Global Warming a Real Threat?* (Issue 16); and *Are Homeopathic Remedies Legitimate?* (Issue 19). For eight of the issues, I have retained the topic from the second edition but have replaced one or both of the selections in order to bring the debate up-to-date or to focus more clearly on the controversy: Issue 2 on physician-assisted suicide; Issue 4 on gun control as a public health

issue; Issue 5 on mandating healthy behavior; Issue 12 on AIDS; Issue 14 on the Gulf War Syndrome; Issue 15 on pesticide exposure; Issue 17 on yo-yo dieting; and Issue 18 on immunization. As a result, there is a total of 24 new readings. The issue introductions and postscripts have all been revised and updated.

In addition to changes in topics and selections, a new feature, *On the Internet*, has been added to each part opener. Several relevant sites on the World Wide Web have been identified and annotated.

A word to the instructor *An Instructor's Manual With Test Questions* (both multiple-choice and essay) is available through the publisher for instructors using *Taking Sides* in the classroom. Also available is a general guidebook, *Using Taking Sides in the Classroom*, which discusses teaching techniques and methods for integrating the pro-con approach of *Taking Sides* into any classroom setting.

An online version of *Using Taking Sides in the Classroom* and a correspondence service for *Taking Sides* adopters can be found at www.cybsol.com/usingtakingsides/.

Taking Sides: Clashing Views on Controversial Issues in Health and Society is only one title in the *Taking Sides* series. If you are interested in seeing the table of contents for any of the other titles, please visit the *Taking Sides* Web site at <http://www.dushkin.com/takingsides/>.

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INTRODUCTION

Dimensions and Approaches to the Study of Health and Society

Eileen L. Daniel

WHAT IS HEALTH?

Traditionally, being healthy meant being absent of illness. If someone did not have a disease, then he or she was considered to be healthy. The overall health of a nation or specific population was determined by numbers measuring illness, disease, and death rates. Today, this rather negative view of assessing individual health and health in general is changing. A healthy person is one who is not only free from disease but also fully well.

Being well, or wellness, involves the interrelationship of many dimensions of health: physical, emotional, social, mental, and spiritual. This multifaceted view of health reflects a holistic approach, which includes individuals taking responsibility for their own well-being.

Our health and longevity are affected by the many choices we make every day: Medical reports tell us that if we abstain from smoking, drugs, excessive alcohol consumption, fat, and cholesterol, and if we get regular exercise, our rate of disease and disability will significantly decrease. These reports, although not totally conclusive, have encouraged many people to make positive lifestyle changes. Millions of people have quit smoking, alcohol consumption is down, and more and more individuals are exercising regularly and eating low-fat diets. These changes are encouraging, but many people have been unable or unwilling to make them and are left feeling worried and/or guilty over continuing their negative health behaviors.

Additionally, experts disagree about the exact nature of positive health behaviors, and this causes confusion. For example, some scientists claim that Americans should make efforts to reduce their serum cholesterol in order to lower their risk of heart disease. Other researchers claim that lowering serum cholesterol has no significant effect on heart health. Whom do you believe? Experts also disagree on the risks of global warming, whether or not sex education prevents unwanted pregnancy, and the role of exercise in increasing longevity.

Health status is also affected by society and government. Societal pressures have helped pass smoking restrictions in public places, mandatory safety belt legislation, and laws permitting condom distribution in public schools. The government plays a role in the health of individuals as well, although it has failed to provide minimal health care for many low-income Americans.

Unfortunately, there are no absolute answers to many questions regarding health and wellness issues. Moral questions, controversial concerns, and individual perceptions of health matters all can create opposing views. As you evaluate the issues in this book, you should keep an open mind toward both sides. You may not change your mind regarding the morality of abortion or the limitation of health care for the elderly, but you will still be able to learn from the opposing viewpoint.

WELLNESS, BEHAVIOR, AND SOCIETY

The issues in this book are divided into six parts. The first deals with health care and society. The topics addressed in Part 1 include a debate on whether or not managed health care offers consumers an improvement over traditional care. In the United States, approximately 35 to 40 million Americans have no health insurance. There has been a resurgence in diseases such as tuberculosis and antibiotic-resistant strains of bacterial infections, which threaten thousands of Americans and strain the current system. Those enrolled in government programs such as Medicaid often find few, if any, physicians who will accept them as patients since reimbursements are low and the paperwork is cumbersome. On the other hand, Americans continue to live longer and longer, and for most of us, the health care available is among the best in the world.

Issue 2 deals with whether or not physicians should intervene in hastening death for hopelessly ill persons. Many Americans agree that we cannot and should not prolong the lives of terminally ill patients, although others believe that physicians should not hasten the process of dying but rather should offer these persons relief from pain and quality of life management strategies. In Issue 3, Daniel Callahan, the director of the Hastings Center, believes that the increasing proportion of health care dollars that is going to the elderly cannot be allowed to continue. Physicians Ezekiel and Linda Emanuel disagree with Callahan. The fourth controversy in this section is about the epidemic of homicide and the potential benefits of more stringent gun control. Doctors and public health officials claim that homicides involving guns are increasing and that owning a gun is dangerous. They maintain that gun control would help slow down the shootings and deaths. Opponents of gun control argue that only criminals—not law-abiding citizens—would have access to guns. They also contend that doctors should leave the gun control issue to criminologists.

MIND/BODY RELATIONSHIP

Part 2 discusses two important issues related to the relationship between mind and body. Should the government mandate healthy behaviors, and can spirituality overcome disease? Over the past 10 years, both laypeople and the medical profession have placed an emphasis on the prevention of illness

as a way to improve health. Not smoking, for instance, certainly reduces the risk of developing lung cancer. Unfortunately, the current U.S. health care system places an emphasis on treatment rather than on prevention, even though prevention is less expensive, less painful, and more humane. Michael Jacobson, director of the Center for Science in the Public Interest, states that the emphasis on treatment has neglected prevention. Jacob Sullum claims that by treating risky behavior like a communicable disease, the medical establishment invites the government to meddle in our personal lives.

SUBSTANCE USE AND ABUSE

Part 3 introduces current issues related to drug use and abuse in the United States. Millions of Americans use and abuse drugs that alter their minds and affect their bodies. These drugs range from illegal substances, such as crack cocaine and marijuana, to the widely used legal drugs, alcohol and tobacco. Use of these substances can lead to physical and psychological addiction and the related problems of family dysfunction, reduced worker productivity, and crime. Because of drug-related crime, many experts have argued for the legalization of drugs, particularly marijuana. The legalization of marijuana for medicinal purposes is another relevant issue concerning the drug.

The American drug crisis is often related to changes in or a breakdown of traditional values. The collapse of strong family and religious influences may affect drug usage, especially among young people. Illicit drugs remain a problem in this country, and alcohol also continues to be a major concern. Alcohol is a factor in car crashes, violence, and health problems. Heavy drinkers are at risk for cirrhosis, cancer, hypertension, malnutrition, and other illnesses. Although these risks are well known, some experts maintain that moderate drinking can actually improve health by reducing stress and heart attacks. They believe that moderate drinking should be promoted as a means of reducing heart disease. Also in this section is a debate on passive smoking. The individual's right to smoke in public is set against the nonsmoker's health risks when forced to breathe tobacco smoke. There is also debate over the research used to link passive smoking and health concerns.

SEXUALITY AND GENDER ISSUES

For years, women in North America have had the option of augmenting the size of their breasts by having silicone implants placed under their skin. Some women have the operation to reconstruct their breasts following a mastectomy, but most opt for the surgery for cosmetic reasons. Recently, some women with breast implants have claimed that the silicone has caused health problems ranging from headaches to autoimmune diseases. Several successful lawsuits were based on the premise that silicone caused these health problems. Jennifer Washburn holds this opinion, but Michael Fumento

in "A Confederacy of Boobs" argues that there is no conclusive evidence that silicone causes disease.

Other issues discussed in this section include the debate over whether or not our health care system favors men at the expense of women. Although they live longer than men, many women claim that they have been excluded from drug tests and other medical research and receive inferior care when they see doctors. Physician Andrew Kadar disagrees with this premise. He claims that women see their doctors more frequently than men, are hospitalized more often, and continue to outlive men by several years.

Issue 12 focuses on whether or not AIDS is a serious risk to the heterosexual, non-drug-abusing population. Author David Boldt believes that the AIDS epidemic has peaked and heterosexual transmission has actually decreased. The general population was never at a high risk for contracting the disease, he claims. Researchers William B. Johnston and Kevin R. Hopkins have an opposing viewpoint. They feel that as heterosexuals become more sexually active, their risk of contracting AIDS increases.

The United States has one of the highest teenage pregnancy rates. Is abortion an acceptable means to end an unwanted pregnancy? Mary Gordon believes that abortion is acceptable and argues in Issue 13 that it is not an immoral choice for women. Jason DeParle, in opposition, discusses why liberals and feminists do not like to talk about the morality of abortion. The abortion issue continues to cause major controversy. More restrictions have been placed on the right to abortion as a result of the political power wielded by the pro-life faction. Pro-choice followers, however, argue that making abortion illegal again will force many women to obtain dangerous, back alley abortions.

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

Debate continues over the two fundamental issues surrounding the environment: human needs and the future of the environment. The debate becomes more heated as the environmental issues move closer to human concerns such as health, economic interests, and politics. In Issue 14, for example, the debate focuses on whether or not troops stationed overseas during the Persian Gulf War were exposed to harmful environmental or chemical substances that caused their present health problems. Issue 15 discusses the safety of pesticide usage on fruits and vegetables. The Alar (a chemical growth regulator for apples) scare convinced many Americans that the apple supply was not safe and that an apple a day could cause cancer. At the same time, nutritionists as well as the Department of Agriculture were urging people to eat more fruits and vegetables to help *prevent* cancer.

The question of whether or not environmental changes are having a serious impact on the average global temperature is debated in Issue 16. Global warming has many implications, including political, health, economic, and environmental. Due to increased levels of greenhouse gases in the atmo-

sphere, global temperatures appear to be rising. Rising temperatures could cause major catastrophes such as loss of plant and animal species, a reduction of the food supply, drought, disease, and flooding of low-lying coastal areas.

NUTRITION, EXERCISE, AND CONSUMER HEALTH

Is yo-yo dieting harmful to health? Should children be immunized? Are homeopathic remedies legitimate? These questions are discussed in Part 6, which deals with consumer health and nutrition.

Millions of Americans are dieting, many going on one diet after another, in an effort to achieve a lean figure. Does constant dieting increase one's risk of heart disease and other medical problems? And does it become harder to lose weight the more frequently one diets? These questions are explored in Issue 17.

This section also introduces questions about particular issues related to choices about health care services: (1) Should all children be immunized against childhood diseases? and (2) Are homeopathic remedies legitimate?

At the turn of the century, millions of American children developed childhood diseases such as tetanus, polio, measles, and pertussis (whooping cough). Many of these children died or became permanently disabled because of these illnesses. Today, vaccines can prevent all of these conditions; however, not all children receive their recommended immunizations. Some do not get vaccinated until the schools require them, and others are allowed exemptions. More and more, parents are requesting exemptions for some or all vaccinations based on fears over their safety and/or their effectiveness. The pertussis vaccination seems to generate the biggest fears. Reports of serious injury to children following the pertussis vaccination (usually given in a combination of diphtheria, pertussis, and tetanus, or DPT) have convinced many parents to forgo immunization. As a result, the incidence rates of measles and pertussis have been climbing after decades of decline. Is it safer to be vaccinated than to risk getting pertussis? Most medical societies and physicians believe so, but Richard Leviton argues that many vaccines are neither safe nor effective.

Current views of homeopathy and the use of homeopathic remedies are discussed in Issue 19. Due to demand by the public, homeopathy is achieving new legitimacy, despite the efforts of traditional medicine to discredit the practice. As more consumers turn their backs on traditional medicine, the use of homeopathic remedies has increased.

Will the many debates presented in this book ever be resolved? Some issues may resolve themselves because of the availability of resources. For instance, funding for health care for the elderly may become restricted in the United States, as it is in the United Kingdom, simply because there are increasingly limited resources to go around. As health costs continue to rise, an overhaul of the health care system to provide managed care for all while keeping costs down seems inevitable. Other controversies may require the test of time for

resolution. Several more years may be required before it can be determined whether or not global warming is really a serious environmental hazard.

Other controversies may never resolve themselves. There may never be a consensus over the abortion issue, gun control, or the dangers of secondhand smoke. This book will introduce you to many ongoing controversies on a variety of sensitive and complex health-related topics. In order to have a good grasp of one's own viewpoint, it is necessary to be familiar with and understand the points made by the opposition.

On the Internet . . .



National Committee for Quality Assurance

The National Committee for Quality Assurance's World Wide Web page features an HMO accreditation status list, updated monthly; accreditation summary reports on a number of HMO plans, and other consumer information on managed care plans. <http://www.ncqa.org>

Euthanasia World Directory

This site deals with euthanasia and contains a newsletter and a main page featuring Dr. Jack Kevorkian. There is also a discussion on the book *Final Exit* and numerous citations about different laws regarding assisted suicide. <http://www.efn.org/~ergo/>

Huffington Center on Aging

The Huffington Center on Aging, Baylor College of Medicine's home page, offers great links to related sites on aging, Alzheimer's disease, and other material related to aging. <http://www.bcm.tmc.edu/hcoa/>

National Institutes of Health

The National Institutes of Health supports and conducts health and medical research. There is also information here about the history of medicine. <http://www.nih.gov>

CONTENTS IN BRIEF

PART 1 HEALTH AND SOCIETY 1

- Issue 1. Will Managed Care Improve Health Care in the United States? 2
- Issue 2. Should Doctors Ever Assist Terminally Ill Patients to Commit Suicide? 18
- Issue 3. Should Health Care for the Elderly Be Limited? 36
- Issue 4. Is Gun Control a Public Health Issue? 60

PART 2 MIND/BODY RELATIONSHIP 77

- Issue 5. Should Healthy Behavior Be Mandated? 78
- Issue 6. Can Spirituality Overcome Disease? 98

PART 3 SUBSTANCE USE AND ABUSE 111

- Issue 7. Is Secondhand Smoke a Proven Health Risk for Nonsmokers? 112
- Issue 8. Should Moderate Use of Alcohol Be Recommended? 132
- Issue 9. Is Marijuana Dangerous and Addictive? 148

PART 4 SEXUALITY AND GENDER ISSUES 163

- Issue 10. Are Silicone Breast Implants a Health Risk to Women? 164
- Issue 11. Does Health Care Delivery and Research Benefit Men at the Expense of Women? 186
- Issue 12. Is AIDS a Major Threat to the Heterosexual, Non-Drug-Abusing Population? 208
- Issue 13. Can Abortion Be a Morally Acceptable Choice? 226

PART 5 ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES 247

- Issue 14. Is the Gulf War Syndrome Real? 248
- Issue 15. Is Pesticide Exposure Harmful to Human Health? 274
- Issue 16. Public Policy and Health: Is Global Warming a Real Threat? 290

PART 6 CONSUMER HEALTH AND NUTRITION DECISIONS 307

- Issue 17. Is Yo-Yo Dieting Dangerous? 308
- Issue 18. Should All Children Be Immunized Against Childhood Diseases? 322
- Issue 19. Are Homeopathic Remedies Legitimate? 346

CONTENTS

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Preface | i |
| Introduction: Dimensions and Approaches to the Study of Health and Society | xiv |
| PART 1 HEALTH AND SOCIETY | 1 |
| ISSUE 1. Will Managed Care Improve Health Care in the United States? | 2 |
| YES: David Jacobsen, from "Cost-Conscious Care," <i>Reason</i> | 4 |
| NO: A. Kent MacDougall, from "Health-Care Hell: One Man's Descent into the Abyss," <i>The Progressive</i> | 9 |
| <p>Surgeon David Jacobsen makes the claim that health maintenance organizations (HMOs) offer quality care and that high-quality medical care at an affordable price is not only possible under managed care; it is a reality. Journalism professor A. Kent MacDougall contends that joining a managed care program was the most painful mistake in his life.</p> | |
| <hr/> | |
| ISSUE 2. Should Doctors Ever Assist Terminally Ill Patients to Commit Suicide? | 18 |
| YES: Marcia Angell, from "The Supreme Court and Physician-Assisted Suicide: The Ultimate Right," <i>The New England Journal of Medicine</i> | 20 |
| NO: Kathleen M. Foley, from "Competent Care for the Dying Instead of Physician-Assisted Suicide," <i>The New England Journal of Medicine</i> | 27 |
| <p>Marcia Angell, M.D., executive editor of <i>The New England Journal of Medicine</i>, believes that physician-assisted suicide should be permitted under some circumstances and that not all of the pain of the dying can be controlled. Physician Kathleen M. Foley believes that doctors do not know enough about their patients, themselves, or suffering, to provide assistance with dying as a medical treatment for the relief of suffering.</p> | |
| <hr/> | |
| ISSUE 3. Should Health Care for the Elderly Be Limited? | 36 |
| YES: Daniel Callahan, from "Setting Limits: A Response," <i>The Gerontologist</i> | 38 |

- NO: Ezekiel J. Emanuel and Linda L. Emanuel**, from "The Economics of Dying: The Illusion of Cost Savings at the End of Life," *The New England Journal of Medicine* 49

Hastings Center director Daniel Callahan believes that medical care for elderly people should not involve expensive health care services that serve only to forestall death. Physicians Ezekiel J. Emanuel and Linda L. Emanuel argue that cost savings due to limitations in medical care at the end of life are not likely to be substantial.

ISSUE 4. Is Gun Control a Public Health Issue? 60

YES: Josh Sugarmann, from "Reverse Fire," *Mother Jones* 62

NO: Don B. Kates, Henry E. Schaffer, and William C. Waters IV, from "Public Health Pot Shots: How the CDC Succumbed to the Gun 'Epidemic,'" *Reason* 65

Josh Sugarmann, executive director of the Violence Policy Center, an education foundation that researches firearm violence and advocates gun control, argues that guns increase the costs of hospitalization, rehabilitation, and lost wages, making them a serious public health issue. Attorney Don B. Kates, Professor Henry E. Schaffer and William C. Waters IV, a physician, counter that most gun-related violence is caused by aberrants, not ordinary gun owners.

PART 2 MIND/BODY RELATIONSHIP 77

ISSUE 5. Should Healthy Behavior Be Mandated? 78

YES: Michael F. Jacobson, from "Prevention's the Issue: Your Money or Your Life Style," *The Nation* 80

NO: Jacob Sullum, from "What the Doctor Orders," *Reason* 84

Michael F. Jacobson, a microbiologist and the director of the Center for Science in the Public Interest, claims that federal policies emphasizing healthy behavior would not only improve public health but reduce health care spending. Journalist and author Jacob Sullum argues that, by treating risky behavior like a communicable disease, the public health establishment invites the government to meddle in our private lives.

ISSUE 6. Can Spirituality Overcome Disease? 98

YES: Herbert Benson and Marg Stark, from *Timeless Healing: The Power and Biology of Belief* 100

NO: William B. Lindley, from "Prayer and Healing," *Truth Seeker* 105

Herbert Benson, associate professor of medicine at Harvard Medical School, and journalist Marg Stark contend that faith and spirituality will enhance and prolong life. William B. Lindley, associate editor of *Truth Seeker*, counters that there is no scientific way to determine that spirituality can heal.

PART 3 SUBSTANCE USE AND ABUSE 111

ISSUE 7. Is Secondhand Smoke a Proven Health Risk for Nonsmokers? 112

YES: Editors of *Consumer Reports*, from "Secondhand Smoke: Is It a Hazard?" *Consumer Reports* 114

NO: Jacob Sullum, from "Just How Bad Is Secondhand Smoke?" *National Review* 125

The editors of *Consumer Reports* argue that there is sound scientific data proving that secondhand smoke causes lung cancer and other illnesses. Editor and journalist Jacob Sullum argues that there is no evidence that secondhand smoking carries the dangers associated with actually smoking.

ISSUE 8. Should Moderate Use of Alcohol Be Recommended? 132

YES: Dave Shiflett, from "Here's to Your Health," *The American Spectator* 134

NO: Meir J. Stampfer, Eric B. Rimm, and Diana Chapman Walsh, from "Alcohol, the Heart, and Public Policy," *American Journal of Public Health* 141

Writer Dave Shiflett claims that for years the antidrinking establishment has insisted that even moderate drinking is bad for health despite the fact that science indicates otherwise. Physicians Meir J. Stampfer and Eric B. Rimm and professor Diana Chapman Walsh argue that encouraging the use of alcohol, even in moderation, could lead to an increase in its consumption, with potentially dangerous results.

ISSUE 9. Is Marijuana Dangerous and Addictive? 148

YES: Eric A. Voth, from "Should Marijuana Be Legalized as a Medicine? No, It's Dangerous and Addictive," *The World and I* 150

NO: Ethan A. Nadelmann, from "Reefer Madness 1997: The New Bag of Scare Tactics," *Rolling Stone* 155

Eric A. Voth, medical director of Chemical Dependency Services at St. Francis Hospital in Topeka, Kansas, argues that marijuana produces many adverse