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HCR Turns Forty; What's Next?

Gregory E. Kaebnick

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FROM THE EDITOR

HCR Turns Forty; What's Next?

This issue of the *Hastings Center Report* features two articles on two issues that lie outside the range of usual topics for bioethics. The lead article, by Joseph Millum, a bioethicist at the Clinical Center Department of Bioethics and the Fogarty International Center at the National Institutes of Health, looks at the ethics of “bioprospecting”—that is, the search for novel biological products in places around the world that are rich in biological resources. Often, these places turn out to be in developing countries, and since the search for novel products is also a search for potentially lucrative products, the question arises, How should the benefits of bioprospecting be shared? The second article, by Michael Gross, a political scientist at the University of Haifa, considers the ethics of building what he calls “medicalized” weapons—weapons that apply medical knowledge to incapacitate their targets. Gross asks whether medical ethics forbids medical caregivers from assisting with these weapons.

Both topics are unusual enough for bioethics that when we first received the manuscripts, we wondered a little whether they quite fit within our scope, and with both articles we cast about a little to find suitable external reviewers. But we are pleased with the outcome, and it's always good to be stretched.

Which leads to another way this issue looks outside bioethics' usual range. This volume is our fortieth, and we have been mulling various ways of marking that fact. For the Center's fortieth anniversary, celebrated last year, we assembled a set of essays examining the four “founding issues” that the Center took on at its inception (in case you forgot: genetics, death and dying, population control, and behavior control). The essayists were the Center's founders and early staff. To mark the *Report's* fortieth, we decided on a complementary strategy: we'll look forward, in two ways. We'll ask what issues bioethics should be looking at in coming years, and we'll look to the next generation for answers. To do the latter, we'll throw the doors open: we'll read anything that any student, graduate fellow, or untenured professor in bioethics sends us (current or former Center staff excluded), and we'll publish the best of the lot in the November-December issue. Essays might call for new ways of doing bioethics or examine the implication of trends within the general categories of issues that the Center now addresses—clinical care, public health, health policy, new technologies, and medical research. Essays might also, like the articles in this issue, identify particular underexamined topics. We anticipate publishing a set of essays rather than a single, especially remarkable piece.

The ideal essay would be 1,600 words long. Essays can be sent to us at editorial@thehastingscenter.org, and they should arrive by August 15, 2010. This isn't a formal contest, and there will be no prizes or awards; just our gratitude for helping us move into the next forty years. —GEK ■

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