

[Answers for today's
hardest questions]

Bioethics (bī 'o-ěth'iks) n. The study of the moral implications of biological discoveries, medical care and health policy.

Science and medicine are moving faster than at any point in history, but often too little time is taken to look at the questions of morality and justice that this biorevolution is creating.

Leading the way, the Phoebe R. Berman Bioethics Institute is anticipating and addressing these questions to profoundly impact how ethical and social dilemmas are resolved.

[THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS
VALUE-NEUTRAL SCIENCE]

Biomedical research offers tremendous promise to improve the quality of our lives, but there are ethical risks to many breakthroughs. How can we understand what is acceptable and what is not? How do we distribute risks fairly? Who should control medical technology? Consider this...

WE CAN READ YOUR MIND

This may sound far-fetched, but new functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) machines allow doctors to watch our minds working by examining the metabolic activity of brain cells in real time. This technology could help develop better treatments for Alzheimer's or depression, but there are other possible uses with real ethical dilemmas. What if police use a fMRI during interrogations as a lie detector? What if companies decide to randomly scan managers to prevent fraud or thefts? What if you are denied insurance because a brain scan suggests you are prone to depression? Do you have a right to privacy for your thoughts?

[WHEN THERE ARE MANY
THINGS WE CAN DO...]

...knowing what we should do is hard. It seems like every day 'medical miracles' are announced. Frequently, new techniques present patients, their families, doctors and nurses with complicated decisions they feel ill-prepared to handle. What ethical issues arise in providing care? Consider this...

REAL CASE, REAL QUESTIONS

A 70 year-old deaf and mentally-disabled woman was diagnosed with bone cancer in her arm. The case was dire and her doctor recommended amputation and an experimental chemotherapy. She had been taken care of her entire life by her brother, with whom she communicated by sign language. The brother felt she wouldn't understand a concept like cancer and refused to help relay the fact that she was dying. While amputation and aggressive chemo were considered the best course of treatment, it was far from a guaranteed cure and would silence her only means of communication.

Should the doctor respect the brother's decision, or would withholding information from a patient cross the line? Is preserving life the physician's highest objective or should quality of life be equally considered?

[MORE OPTIONS MEAN MORE CHALLENGES]

Policies aimed at advancing the public's health often conflict with other societal values. From emerging threats like global pandemics to domestic issues such as Medicare coverage, public policy demands moral reflection. How should the interests of society and the interests of individuals be balanced? Consider this...

HERE ARE SOME COLD, HARD FACTS

FACT: There will likely be a global flu pandemic and when it begins, people are going to get sick and die. FACT: There will not be enough medication or vaccine. Deciding who will be treated first will, in effect, be deciding who will live and who will die.

How to distribute scarce resources demands careful decision making, especially when lives are at risk. In the case of pandemic flu, there are many ethical dimensions. For instance, should the very young, old and ill receive vaccines first, even if the healthy are more likely to benefit from being vaccinated? Should first responders be compelled to take vaccines in advance of a pandemic, even if they have not been fully tested and proven safe? Will the government have ethical explanations for the tough choices it will make?

[the Answer]

The Phoebe R. Berman Bioethics Institute believes answers to bioethical dilemmas demand open dialogue, and the broader the perspective the better. Our faculty is drawn from across the Johns Hopkins Institutions, bringing the skills of doctors, nurses, scientists, philosophers, public health and legal experts together to tackle the tough questions. As part of a leading university and a medical institution with a world-wide reputation, the Berman Institute has tremendous advantages and affirms Johns Hopkins' commitment to hold bioethics as high as biodiscovery.

Do you find yourself asking questions about ethics in science and medicine?

**JOIN THE INSTITUTE TO BECOME
PART OF THE ANSWER**

[TOUGH QUESTIONS
DEMAND TOUGH THINKING]

Be a part of a rigorous dialogue on some of the greatest challenges of our time.
To learn more and become involved, visit our website or contact the Institute:

The Phoebe R. Berman Bioethics Institute
of the Johns Hopkins University

100 North Charles Street | Suite 740 | Baltimore, MD 21201

tel. 410.516.8500 | www.bioethicsinstitute.org