

## BOOKS IN BRIEF

**Jillian Clare Cohen, Patricia Illingworth, Udo Schuklenk, eds. *The power of pills: social, ethical and legal issues in drug development, marketing and pricing.* Pluto Press, 2006. Pp 320, £19.99, \$35.00, ISBN 0-745-32402-9.** Reviewed by R MacDonald in *Lancet* 2007;369:983-984

The book contains essays by people from various backgrounds including ethicists, economists, health care professionals and a lone representative from the pharmaceutical industry.

**Marc D Hauser. *Moral minds: how nature designed our universal sense of right and wrong.* New York, Ecco, 2006. Pp 489 illustrated, \$27.95, ISBN 978-0-06-078070-8.** Reviewed by N Levy in *N Engl J Med* 2007;356:644-645.

The book combines arguments from psychology, neurosciences, and the study of animal behaviour to postulate that like language, morality is innate to humans. In the author's view when a person contemplates an action or lack of action, she/he inevitably draws conclusions subconsciously about the consequences, benefits, or harms, of that action. These conclusions, about the morality of our actions, are shaped by the culture in which we grow up.

**Mohammadreza Hojat. *Empathy in patient care: antecedents, development, measurement, and outcomes.* New York, Springer, 2007. Pp 295, \$59.95. ISBN 978-0-387-33607-7.** Reviewed by N Haslam in *N Engl J Med* 2007;356:1792.

Empathy is the cognitive ability to see the problem from the point of view of another and sympathy is the emotional response to that view. Empathy has usually been felt to compromise clinical judgment and is thus considered detrimental for the physician-patient relationship. The author, a researcher in medical education, describes with the help of research studies how empathy actually benefits both the patient and the physician.

**Lainie Friedman Ross. *Children in medical research: access versus protection. (Issues in Biomedical Ethics.)* New York, Oxford University Press, 2006. Pp 285, \$74, ISBN 978-0-19-927328-7.** Reviewed by KJ Maschke in *N Engl J Med* 2007;356:876-877.

The author reviews the current standards for paediatric participation in research, which are based on how one defines risk and benefit to the participant. She suggests revising the definition of risk so that the definition is not dependent on the participant's current health condition.

**Michael L Gross. *Bioethics and armed conflict: moral dilemmas of medicine and war (Basic Bioethics.)* Cambridge, MA, MIT Press, 2006. Pp 384, \$65 (cloth); \$26 (paper), ISBN 978-0-262-07269-4 (cloth); 978-0-262-57226-2 (paper).** Reviewed by JC Moskop in *N Engl J Med* 2007;356:1386-1387.

The book examines the ethical dilemmas faced by physicians

who serve in the military. Contrary to the prevailing view that the physician must not participate in any action that harms a person, the author argues that the physician must weigh the risks posed to an entire community against the responsibility to an individual. The well being of the collective is more important than that of an individual and so complicity with torture and participation in development of weapons, to protect the many, is permissible. The reviewer finds these arguments against the Geneva Conventions problematic.

**Christina Zarcadoolas, Andrew F Pleasant, David S Greer. *Advancing health literacy: a framework for understanding and action.* San Francisco, Jossey-Bass, 2006. Pp 368, illustrated, \$50, ISBN 978-0-7879-8433-5.** Reviewed by LM Sanders in *N Engl J Med* 2007;356:757-758.

Even though there is a lot of information in the media about health, few people can understand this information. This book, through case studies, describes how health information can be simplified and made understandable to an average person. The reviewer strongly recommends the book for all public health professionals, especially those who interact with the media.

**Jennifer Jackson. *Ethics in medicine.* Cambridge, Polity Press, 2006. Pp 232, £15.99; \$24.95, ISBN 0-7456-2569-X.** Reviewed by H Upton in *J Med Ethics* 2007;33:185-186.

The reviewer recommends the book for the concise descriptions, without jargon, of the common ethical questions encountered in clinical practice.

**James Chin. *The AIDS pandemic: the collision of epidemiology with political correctness.* Radcliffe Publishing, 2007. Pp 248, £27.50, \$39.95, ISBN 1-846-19118-1.** Reviewed by A Whiteside in *Lancet* 2007;369:1073-1074.

The reviewer, while calling this book polemical, nevertheless accepts the main argument that activists and health professionals overstate the case for a pandemic to ensure funding for the patients and also for their own jobs. Chin asserts that HIV is not an easily transmissible virus and infection requires risk behaviours like frequent exchange of partners, behaviours that are predominant in some countries. He declares that HIV programmes are intent on being politically correct and ignore the epidemiological data.

**Wendy Wagner, Rena Steinzor, eds. *Rescuing science from politics: regulation and the distortion of scientific research.* New York, Cambridge University Press, 2006. Pp 304, \$75 (cloth); \$29.99 (paper), ISBN 978-0-521-85520-4 (cloth); 978-0-521-54009-4 (paper).** Reviewed by CV Dang in *N Engl J Med* 2007;356:1484-1485.

The 12 essays in this book highlight the central theme of how the government or special interest groups can distort scientific findings to suit their own agenda.