

TAKING SIDES



Clashing Views in
Health and Society

NINTH EDITION

Selected, Edited, and with Introductions by

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Preface

This book contains 40 articles arranged in 20 *pro* and *con* pairs. Each pair addresses a controversial issue in health and society, expressed in terms of a question 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 managed care, abortion, and drug use and abuse. The authors of these articles take strong stands on specific issues and provide support for their positions. While 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, with each containing related issues. Each issue is preceded by an *introduction*, which sets the stage for the debate, gives historical background on 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 because 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, theologians, and scientists whose views are debated here.

Taking Sides: Clashing Views on Controversial Issues in Health and Society, 9th edition, 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 ninth edition of *Taking Sides: Clashing Views on Controversial Issues in Health and Society* includes some important changes from previous editions. For other issues, I have kept the topic from the eighth edition but have replaced one or both of the selections to make the topic more current or more clearly focus the controversy. As a result, there are a total of 6 new issues and 14 new articles. The introductions and postscripts have been revised and updated.

Supplements 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.

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UNIT 1 THE HEALTH CARE INDUSTRY 1

Issue 1. Should the United States Adopt a Single-Payer Plan to Fund National Health Insurance? 2

YES: **Physicians for a National Health Program**, from “Proposal of the Physicians’ Working Group for Single Payer National Health Insurance,” (2006). <http://www.pnhp.org/> 4

NO: **Ezekiel J. Emanuel**, from “The Problem with Single-Payer Plans,” *Hastings Center Report* (January–February 2008) 8

Physicians for a National Health Program argue that single-payer financing is the only way to insure that all Americans would be covered for all needed medical services. Physician and director of the Clinical Bioethics Department at the U.S. National Institutes of Health, Ezekiel Emanuel opposes the proposed adoption of a single-payer system of national health insurance in the United States on the basis that it would not fix the present health care problems.

Issue 2. Should Life-Sustaining Medical Care Be Rationed Based on Age? 16

YES: **Clare M. Clarke**, from “Rationing Scarce Life-Sustaining Resources on the Basis of Age,” *Journal of Advanced Nursing* (September 2001) 18

NO: **Norman G. Levinsky**, from “Can We Afford Medical Care for Alice C?” *The Lancet* (December 1998) 27

Clare Clarke believes that rationing health care in old age has some merit and that the treatment of young people should be a priority. Norman Levinsky, a practicing physician, argues that health care should not be rationed by age and that age bias should be recognized and confronted.

Issue 3. Is the Pharmaceutical Industry Responsible for the High Cost of Prescription Drugs? 34

YES: **Christopher F. Koller**, from “Prescription for Trouble: Why Drug Prices Keep Exploding,” *Commonweal* (June 15, 2001) 36

NO: **Peter W. Huber**, from “Of Pills and Profits: In Defense of Big Pharma,” *Commentary* (July/August 2006) 43

Christopher Koller, CEO of Neighborhood Health Plan of Rhode Island, a health plan serving Medicaid enrollees based in Providence, believes that the pharmaceutical industry has achieved its rapid growth by political protection and by exploiting the vulnerabilities of patients. Senior fellow of

the Manhattan Institute Peter Huber looks at the criticisms against the pharmaceutical industry in the United States and argues that the pharmaceutical industry serves a valuable function and will likely find cures for major diseases.

UNIT 2 HEALTH AND SOCIETY 57

Issue 4. Is Drug Testing Vital to the Workplace? 58

YES: William F. Current, from “Cut Costs and Increase Safety with Pre-Employment Drug Testing,” *Occupational Hazards* (July 2002) 60

NO: Jacob Sullum, from “Urine—or You’re Out: Drug Testing Is Invasive, Insulting, and Generally Irrelevant to Job Performance. Why Do So Many Companies Insist on It?” *Reason* (November 2002) 64

William Current, president of WFC & Associates, a national consulting firm specializing in drug-free workplace policies believes that pre-employment drug testing is accepted, hassle-free, and beneficial to employers. Jacob Sullum, senior editor of Reason Magazine, argues that employment-based drug testing is insulting to employees and mostly irrelevant to future job performance.

Issue 5. Should Doctors Ever Help Terminally Ill Patients to Commit Suicide? 77

YES: Richard T. Hull, from “The Case for Physician-Assisted Suicide,” *Free Inquiry* (Spring 2003) 79

NO: Margaret Somerville, from “The Case Against: Euthanasia and Physician-Assisted Suicide,” *Free Inquiry* (Spring 2003) 83

Richard Hull, professor emeritus of philosophy at the State University of New York at Buffalo, asserts physician-assisted suicide is the only resource terminally ill patients have with which to communicate that end-of-life care is inadequate. Margaret Somerville, Gale Professor of Law and Professor in the Faculty of Medicine at the McGill University in Montreal, Canada, argues that two basic reasons to oppose euthanasia include the sanctity of human life and the harms and risks to individuals and to society outweigh any possible benefits.

Issue 6. Should the Government Regulate the Sale, Advertisement, and Distribution of Junk Food? 90

YES: Marion Nestle and Michael F. Jacobson, from “Halting the Obesity Epidemic: A Public Health Policy Approach,” *Public Health Reports* (January/February 2000) 92

NO: Michelle Cottle, from “Heavy Duty—The War on Tobacco Becomes the War on Fat,” *The New Republic* (May 13, 2002) 109

Professor of nutrition Dr. Marion Nestle and Dr. Michael Jacobson, executive director of Center for Science in the Public Interest, believe that the government should be substantially involved in the regulation of nonnutritious foods. Writer Michelle Cottle argues that nonnutritious food

should not be regulated any more than other unhealthy products and that our relationships to food are too complex for the government to oversee.

Issue 7. Should Doctors Prescribe Drugs Based on Race? 117

YES: **Sally Satel**, from "I am a Racially Profiling Doctor," *The New York Times Magazine* (May 5, 2002) 119

NO: **Gregory Michael Dorr and David S. Jones**, from "Facts and Fiction: BiDil and the Resurgence of Racial Medicine," *Journal of Law, Medicine & Ethics* (Fall 2008) 124

Physician Sally Satel believes it important to note a patient's race and to treat accordingly because many diseases and treatment responses cluster by race and ethnicity. Professors Gregory Michael Dorr and David Jones argue that there is risk to using race and ethnicity to select treatment options.

Issue 8. Should Embryonic Stem Cell Research Be Permitted? 134

YES: **Jeffrey Hart**, from "NR on Stem Cells: The Magazine Is Wrong," *National Review* (April 19, 2004) 136

NO: **Ramesh Ponnuru**, from "NR on Stem Cells: The Magazine Is Right," *National Review* (April 19, 2004) 139

Professor Jeffrey Hart contends there are many benefits to stem cell research and that a ban on funded cloning research is unjustified. Writer Remesh Ponnuru argues that a single-celled human embryo is a living organism that directs its own development and should not be used for experimentation.

UNIT 3 MIND-BODY RELATIONSHIP 145

Issue 9. Should Addiction to Drugs Be Labeled a Brain Disease? 146

YES: **Alan I. Leshner**, from "Addiction Is a Brain Disease," *Issues in Science and Technology* (Spring 2001) 148

NO: **Sally L. Satel**, from "The Fallacies of No-Fault Addiction," *The Public Interest* (Winter 1999) 155

Alan I. Leshner, director of the National Institute on Drug Abuse at the National Institutes of Health, believes that addiction to drugs and alcohol is not a behavioral condition but a treatable disease. Psychiatrist Sally L. Satel counters that labeling addiction a chronic and relapsing brain disease is propaganda and that most addicts are the instigators of their own addiction.

Issue 10. Do Religion and Prayer Benefit Health? 168

YES: **Gregg Easterbrook**, from "Is Religion Good for Your Health?" *The New Republic* (July 19 & 26, 1999) 170

NO: **Michael Shermer**, from "Prayer and Healing: The Verdict Is in and the Results Are Null," *Skeptic* (vol. 12, no. 3, 2006) 176

Writer Gregg Easterbrook believes men and women who practice in any of the mainstream faiths enjoy better health and that lack of religious involvement does have a negative effect on morality. Author Michael Shermer contends that intercessory prayer offered by strangers on the health and recovery of patients undergoing coronary bypass surgery is ineffective. He also addresses flaws in studies showing a relationship between prayer and health.

UNIT 4 SEXUALITY AND GENDER ISSUES 183

Issue 11. Is It Necessary for Pregnant Women to Completely Abstain from All Alcoholic Beverages? 184

YES: **Phyllida Brown**, from “Drinking for Two,” *New Scientist* (July 1, 2006) 186

NO: **Julia Moskin**, from “The Weighty Responsibility of Drinking for Two,” *The New York Times* (November 29, 2006) 191

Science writer Phyllida Brown maintains that even a small amount of alcohol can damage a developing fetus and cites new research indicating that even small amounts of alcohol consumed during pregnancy may be harmful. Journalist Julia Moskin argues that there are almost no studies on the effects of moderate drinking during pregnancy and that small amounts of alcohol are unlikely to have much effect.

Issue 12. Should Pro-Life Health Providers Be Allowed to Deny Prescriptions on the Basis of Conscience? 197

YES: **John A. Menges**, from “Public Hearing on HB4346 Before the House State Government Administration Committee,” *Illinois House State Government Administration Committee* (February 15, 2006) 199

NO: **R. Alta Charo**, from “The Celestial Fire of Conscience—Refusing to Deliver Medical Care,” *New England Journal of Medicine* (June 16, 2005) 202

Pharmacist John Menges believes that it is his right to refuse to dispense any medication designed to end a human life. Attorney R. Alta Charo argues that health care professionals who protect themselves from the moral consequences of their actions may do so at their patients’ risk.

Issue 13. Should the Cervical Cancer Vaccine for Girls Be Compulsory? 208

YES: **Cynthia Dailard**, from “Achieving Universal Vaccination Against Cervical Cancer in the United States: The Need and the Means,” *Guttmacher Policy Review* (Fall 2006) 210

NO: **Gail Javitt, Deena Berkowitz, and Lawrence O. Gostin**, from “Assessing Mandatory HPV Vaccination: Who Should Call the Shots?” *Journal of Law, Medicine & Ethics* (Summer 2008) 217

The late Cynthia Dailard, a senior public policy associate at the Guttmacher Institute, argued that universal vaccination was needed because virtually all cases of cervical cancer are linked to the human papillomavirus. Most

infected people are unaware of their infection, which is linked to nearly 10,000 cases of cervical cancer. Professors Gail Javitt, Deena Bertowitz, and Lawrence Gostin believe that mandating the cervical cancer vaccine raises significant legal, ethical, and social concerns. They are also concerned about the long-term safety and effectiveness of the vaccine.

Issue 14. Is There a Post-Abortion Syndrome? 237

YES: Ian Gentles, from “Poor God-Crazed Rhonda: Daring to Challenge the ‘Scientific’ Consensus,” *The Human Life Review* (Spring 2007) 239

NO: Emily Bazelon, from “Is There a Post-Abortion Syndrome?” *The New York Times Magazine* (January 21, 2007) 245

Ian Gentles, Vice President of the deVeber institute for Bioethics and Social Research in Ontario, maintains that there is a causal connection between abortion and increased risk of suicide. Senior editor and author Emily Bazelon counters that the psychological risks posed by abortion are no greater than the risk of carrying an unwanted pregnancy to term.

UNIT 5 PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUES 263

Issue 15. Is There a Link Between Vaccination and Autism? 264

YES: Robert F. Kennedy Jr., from “Deadly Immunity,” *Rolling Stone* (June 30–July 14, 2005) 266

NO: Matthew Normand and Jesse Dallery, from “Mercury Rising: Exposing the Vaccine-Autism Myth,” *Skeptic*, (vol. 13, no. 3, 2007) 276

Environmentalist and attorney Robert F. Kennedy Jr. argues that childhood vaccines containing thimerosal are linked to autism and that the government has colluded with pharmaceutical companies to cover up this information. Psychology professors Matthew Normand and Jesse Dallery contend that studies have failed to uncover any specific link between autism and mercury-containing thimerosal vaccines.

Issue 16. Does Anabolic Steroid Use Cause Serious Health Problems for Athletes? 286

YES: Glenn Cook, from “Steroids: Shortcut to Tragedy,” *American School Board Journal* (August 2004) 288

NO: Dayn Perry, from “Pumped-Up Hysteria: Forget the Hype. Steroids Aren’t Wrecking Professional Baseball,” *Reason* (January 2003) 296

Editor Glenn Cook asserts that anabolic steroids are dangerous to the health of athletes and should not be used. Freelance writer Dayn Perry argues that the health risks of anabolic steroids are greatly exaggerated and that they pose limited harm to athletes.

Issue 17. Will Global Warming Negatively Impact Human Health? 308

YES: Carl Bloice and Conn Hallinan, from “Global Warming,” *California Nurse* (December 2005) 310

NO: **Indur M. Goklany**, from “Stop the Panic on Climate Change,”
USA Today Magazine (May 2008) 317

Bloice and Hallinan maintain that rising global temperatures will increase mosquito-borne diseases, asthma, and heat stroke. Indur Goklany argues that rising global temperatures are not responsible for increased illnesses and deaths.

Issue 18. Is Breastfeeding the Best Way to Feed Babies? 327

YES: **Pat Thomas**, from “Suck on This,” *The Ecologist*
(May 2006) 329

NO: **Hanna Rosin**, from “The Case Against Breastfeeding,” *The Atlantic* (April 2009) 345

Author Pat Thomas believes that breastfeeding is the best and healthiest way to feed infants and children and that formula manufacturers are promoting their products at the expense of babies and children. *Atlantic* editor Hanna Rosin claims the data on the benefits of breastfeeding are inconclusive and suggests a more relaxed approach to the issue.

UNIT 6 CONSUMER HEALTH 357

Issue 19. Is It Safe to Consume Genetically Engineered Foods? 358

YES: **Henry I. Miller and Gregory Conko**, from “Scary Food,”
Policy Review (June/July 2006) 360

NO: **Mark Schapiro**, from “Sowing Disaster: How Genetically Engineered American Corn Has Altered the Global Landscape,”
The Nation (October 28, 2002) 368

Authors Henry I. Miller and Gregory Conko defend biotechnology used in genetically modifying crops and foods and believe they bring many advantages. Reporter Mark Schapiro argues that the impact of genetically engineered products include the emergence of potential allergens that could trigger reactions in humans, the rising resistance of pests to the Bt toxin, and the crossing of new genes into wild relatives.

Issue 20. Does Obesity Cause a Decline in Life Expectancy? 383

YES: **Samuel H. Preston**, from “Deadweight? The Influence of Obesity on Longevity,” *New England Journal of Medicine*
(March 17, 2005) 385

NO: **Paul Campos**, from “The Weighting Game: Why Being Fat Isn’t Bad for You,” *The New Republic* (January 13, 2003) 389

Samuel H. Preston maintains that obesity negatively affects a person’s longevity and has become a major public health problem for Americans. Law professor and writer Paul Campos disagrees and claims that the health consequences of obesity are not as dire as some health officials claim.