



Medical Ethics Newsletter

Catholic Medical Students' Association

Affiliated with the Catholic Medical Association



CMSA Goals

- To provide guidance and support for medical students.
- To support & nurture spiritual growth and moral leadership.
- To promote education in Catholic physician values.
- To develop community among students entering the medical professions.

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THEOLOGY OF THE BODY: THE DIGNITY OF WOMEN

The Catholic Medical Association's October conference "Theology of the Body: the Dignity of Woman" was a blast. I had the opportunity to meet many influential Catholic leaders: Archbishop Wilton Gregory and the CMA's Episcopal adviser, and Bishop Robert Vasa, just to name a few.

And until then, I almost forgot that it could be fun to attend a day of lectures. It sure beat the tedium of learning the TCA cycle or memorizing the list of second generation cephalosporins. It was instructive to hear an honest presentation by Marquette's Richard Fehring regarding modern methods of fertility awareness which can be used by married couples either to postpone or achieve pregnancy.

And all this without ignoring or dismissing the Church's teaching! Then there were the enlightening talks on the psychology of femininity, the failure of condom distribution programs to solve the HIV epidemic, and how to manage the infertile couple without recourse to morally dubious assisted reproductive technologies such as IVF. Of course, this is just a sample of the topics covered.

Certainly the highlight of the conference talks was the positive presentation of the Church's teaching as a viable alternative to the culture of death ever present in women's health care and many other areas of medicine. A Catholic approach to health care affirms the transcendent good of

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REFLECTION ON A UNIQUE GIFT

Have you ever thought about sexuality as a gift – one that you have received and one that you can give away? Indeed, our sexuality is a wonderful gift from God, and if properly integrated into our lives can be a gift to others and of course to God as well.

As told in the story of Creation, God made the world and everything in it, including male and female human beings. God saw what He made and declared them all good. Hence, our sexuality is from God and it is good. However, sexuality is not

simply being a man or a woman. Everything we do, say, think, and feel is linked to our sexuality. It is therefore essential for us to take good care of this gift. We can do this by knowing what this gift is all about and what we can do so we can share it with others the way God intended it to be.

Sexuality is a fundamental component of personality in and through which we experience our relationship with our selves, others, and God. It is not only physical, but also

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REVIEW OF THEOLOGY OF THE BODY: Continued...

the human person and the unique dignity of femininity.

For medical students who are committed to living their faith, attending a CMA conference offers valuable opportunities to network with faithful Catholics while providing reliable information which can assist us in better understanding the truth of the Catholic moral vision before we are thrust full force into the world of ethical dilemmas often encountered in the clinical setting. To see men and women who are applying the principles of the Theology of the Body in their practice of medicine is bracing.

What is more, the CMA conference felt more like a retreat than an academic

exercise. Daily Mass, recitation of the Rosary, and Perpetual Adoration clearly served to make clear that the conference presentations, participants, fellowship and fun were at the service of the Church in fidelity to Our Lord.

I encourage every CMSA member to mark the calendar for October 9-11, 2008 for the 77th Annual Education Conference of the CMA, "Modern Challenges to Health, Conscience, and Human Dignity," to be held in Baltimore, Maryland. This conference will continue the work of applying JP II's Theology of the Body to medicine. I hope to see you there.

Patrick C. Beeman, M.A.
CMSA National President

The Hippocratic Oath is the best summary of medical ethics thus far articulated.

A tradition which should be exemplified by every physician.

REFLECTION ON A UNIQUE GIFT: Continued...

psychological and spiritual. It is to be accepted with happiness and peace, and not anxiety or revile. Sexuality is not demonic, dirty, or shameful. To live as a non-sexual being is to deny a great gift of God. On the other hand, it must not be over-emphasized, divinized and confused with God; that would be idolatry. Sexuality has received bad press because it has been misused or abused, and that happens when one disregards the true nature of sexuality resulting in its isolation and objectification. As such, sexuality is stripped of its personal dimension.

The purpose of sexuality is life; a life of communal love. This is expressed in many ways for different people. For example, in the union of husband and wife, their sexual love conveys a total response to the other individual. Those who are not married are just as blessed with this gift and are able to share love through a life lived in conformity with their sexuality. In all cases, we as Chris-

tians are called to live our sexuality chastely. One who practices chastity is able to form relationships that appreciate the sexuality of the other in the context of love and respect. Integrity requires the practice of authentic chastity. The full expression of the meaning and purpose of sexuality is found in none other than Jesus Christ, who became a sexual human being just like you and me. Jesus as a human being lived a sexually integrated and chaste life, which made it possible for him to love so much to the point of giving up his life for us.

We as Christians are called to imitate Jesus in this action of gift giving. It can be difficult, especially in our time when there is so much temptation to do what is seemingly easier and more pleasurable. Indeed, we cannot do it by ourselves; we can only do it with God's grace.

Fr. Joseph Sia, M.D. 
Mundelein Seminary



CMSA RIGHT OF CONSCIENCE IN THE PRACTICE OF MEDICINE



Serving God & Man

In solidarity with the Catholic Medical Association and all people of good will, the Catholic Medical Students Association wishes to express its concern regarding the November 7, 2007 Opinion of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists' Committee on Ethics, "The Limits of Conscientious Refusal in Reproductive Medicine."

The CMSA concurs with the CMA's judgment regarding the Opinion's flawed ethical analysis and unworkable and discriminatory recommendations that would impose sanctions on Catholic and other physicians who are-out of desire for the authentic good of the patient-morally opposed to abortion, contraception, and certain artificial reproductive technologies, and further calls for the rescinding of ACOG Committee Opinion No. 385.

From a student perspective, the Opinion portends a medical culture in which qualified applicants to residency programs in specialties whose scope includes reproductive medicine and women's health would be denied training based on their religious commitments or moral beliefs. Such intolerable discrimination would be unthinkable in contemporary society which places a high value on diversity. Moreover, it would seem that having a physician whose moral beliefs' comport with one's own would be valuable to the patient, who likewise rejects the liceity of contraception, abortion, and some artificial reproductive technologies. In fact, in such a case, we would argue, a physician could more effectively be an advocate of that patient's health and well-being.

Moreover, there is the concern that, were the Opinion's recommendations fully imple-

mented, Catholic and other students with similar moral beliefs to that of the Catholic Church would be discouraged from pursuing specialties such as Family Practice, OB/GYN, Emergency Medicine, and the myriad other specialties which would be affected by such recommendations. This would deprive the profession of motivated individuals committed to serving patients.

Finally, as students conscious of the principles of Hippocratic medicine and endeavoring in our learning years to form our professional character in conformity with them, we cannot affirm any measure which would contradict the Hippocratic Oath's statement "I will follow that system of regimen which, according to my ability and judgment, I consider for the benefit of my patient, and abstain from whatever is deleterious and mischievous." While the help of professional bodies and "organized advocacy" groups, should be welcomed, a physician is an individual moral agent just as much as a patient, and must thereby be able to make moral decisions of his or her own accord, and not concede the province of this fundamental human ability to the work of a committee.

Chicago, IL - March 20, 2008



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Serving God and man

ON THE WEB AT
WWW.CATHMSA.ORG

Catholic Medical Students' Association
P.O. Box 214
Oak Park, IL 60302
Email: info@cathmsa.org

UPCOMING EVENTS

2008 ANNUAL WHITE MASS *IN HONOR OF ST. LUKE*

HOLY NAME CATHEDRAL
October 19, 2008 at 11:00 AM
State & Superior Streets, Chicago, IL

Celebrant: Bishop Thomas Paprocki

Brunch to follow (\$30.00)
Medical & Dental Students & Children FREE!
Please RSVP to: info@cathmsa.org

CATHOLIC MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

77th Annual National Conference:
"Modern Challenges to Health,
Conscience, and Human Dignity"
October 9-11, 2008 in *Baltimore, Maryland*

Scholarships for medical students are available through the
CMA. For more information or to register online visit:
WWW.CATHMED.ORG

ADVISOR'S COMMENT

Medicine is undoubtedly the most noble of professions (excepting perhaps the priesthood). Why? Medical school is selective and grueling. The business of medicine is evermore onerous, especially with government regulations and third party interference. Is medical school worth it? In a word "yes." Most medical students are compassionate and there is nothing more rewarding than alleviating the suffering and anxiety of a sick fellow human being.

Unfortunately medicine has become materialistic. By that I mean that the human element in medicine is diminished and the material and impersonal aspects are stressed. Michel Foucault (in spite of his deconstructionist leanings)

expressed it well in his "Birth of the Clinic." He notes that our infatuation with molecular pathophysiology has shifted our focus from a Hippocratic compassion for the hurting person to an active pursuit of both "evidence based" normality as well as the pharmacological means to achieve these perceived normal numbers. The hurting human patient becomes an after thought.

We need a return to the human Hippocratic Judeo-Christian Tradition of Medicine. More about this in future CMSA Newsletters...

Patrick Guinan, M.D., M.P.H.
Senior Advisor to the CMSA

NEW MEMBERS

We encourage Students to join the Catholic Medical Association.
For Registration & Membership Information,
Call 1-215-877-9099 or visit WWW.CATHMED.ORG