

Ana Hoerner
9 Dec 2013

This I Believe (end of semester)

Link to ePortfolio: https://slcc.digication.com/ana_priscilas_eportfolio/Interdisciplinary

1. **Patient autonomy** should never stop if others are not harmed. I learned that some people believe that patient autonomy should end when patients begin to cause harm to themselves. Patient autonomy is enhanced by better education, including the education that health care providers give to their patients when informing them of their conditions, procedures, et cetera. I believe individuals oversee their own well-being, and I believe part of that is taking care to educate themselves and make decisions which affect their own health. I think this level of patient autonomy should extend to older children and teenagers who are coconscious enough to participate in their own treatment. I don't have a clear vision of how this can be fairly and judiciously determined, but I do know it has to be on a case by case basis.

2. **Medical research** should be ethically conducted on willing and informed participants only. I don't think it should matter if the participants should expect a certain level of personal benefit from the study, if they're adults and self-advocating, and aware and informed on what they can reasonably expect. I believe medical research should be conducted on children or others unable to speak for themselves if their caretakers, guardians, or parents judge that the study would benefit them, and here I believe the degree of reasonable personal benefit to the participants should be greater, or at least reasonably significant, as a protection afforded to these groups who don't speak for themselves.

3. **Genetic testing** for the future should be available and remain private according to the wishes of the users of genetic testing. I believe genetic testing should be completely voluntary, including genetic testing on newborns. I don't believe religious exemptions should be required. Rather, patient education should be the focus, and then patients should be left to decide whether to proceed with genetic testing or not.

4. **Egg and sperm donation** should be legal and available to anyone who wishes to participate. I agree with placing limits on the number of children per sperm donor, and that's pretty much the only limit. Payments should be legal, as they are, but limits should not be placed on how much donors can receive. I was surprised to learn that brokers can charge whatever they want, but a recommendation is given for how much a woman can receive. It's an arbitrary statement as far as I can tell, and it doesn't

5. **Abortion** should be the choice of the mother with the expert advice and counsel of her doctor and whomever else she wishes to include in her decision. She is the incubator, she should be able to shut it down, and the better educated she is the better informed her decision will be. This education aspect can only be a benefit to her and any future children she may have. It's silly to have our congress or state legislatures dictate scripts of what precise wording or conversation doctors should have with their patients. It is happening, and it's unhelpful.

6. **Treating or terminating impaired infants** should be decided on by her mother and or father, with the expert advice and counsel of her doctor. The parents are the guardians, and therefore theirs are the final decisions on course of action. Here again, patient education is paramount and indispensable to good sound decision making on behalf of the infant.

7. **Euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide** should be legal and freely available to anyone wishing to participate, and not at all state sponsored. It left a very bad taste in my mouth learning about that man from Oregon who received that letter from the state informing him that because his cancer survival outlook wasn't for more than five years that treatment wasn't covered, but that physician assisted suicide is covered. That case, more than any other, made an impact on my opinion. I used to believe that if the government were to cover healthcare for all, then of course physician assisted suicide should be covered as well. Well, not any more. That case was clear cut wrong and unethical to me. Never ever should the state suggest that anyone kill themselves in any way.

8. **Payment to organ donors or their families** should be allowed and transparent. Harvesting organs from the recently deceased is very different from live organ donations. When the patient is alive and expected to survive the transplant, then that patient should be able to exercise her autonomy to participate, and, again, she should be well educated on what her choice would encompass, including understanding what the possible side effects are. Steps should be taken to prevent and curtail predatory practices, although realistically I know it may be impossible to fully abolish that abuse within the system. I was moved by the thought of a parent willing to sell a kidney, for example, if it meant saving her child somehow. I don't want that parent risking having to go to a black market doctor or butcher to make that happen. I would want to protect her or cases like that by bringing the transaction to the realm of what is legal, and allowing her some form of recourse should she need it.

9. **Allocation of health care** should not be considered based on a person's age/quality of life/ability to pay. I believe most people in this country, in this state, agree that if someone needs help, help should be available and enough of us can agree to fund such a safety net. We know health care is not free, and yet I believe, as most of us believe, that any person in need of medical attention and who is actively seeking it should be able to find help regardless of their age, ability to pay, or expected quality of life.

10. **Medical research for women** should be expanded. I still believe it is a huge disservice to exclude fully half the population from medical studies and then treat them according to their findings from studies of men. My opinion did not change on this issue, because this is something that has adversely affected me, my sisters, friends of mine, and I have daughters. It is encouraging to me to know that the issue is being addressed on different mediums and attention is being drawn to it. More work is yet to be done.

11. **Health care for minorities** should be expanded and made more readily available. Efforts to help educate minority groups, especially immigrant groups and others unfamiliar with American style of health care. For this issue, I especially grew in appreciation for those involved in these types of efforts to bring healthcare to thus far disenfranchised groups. These efforts bring good services to many people, and it's a cause I believe in.

12. **Those with AIDS/HIV** should simply try to be responsible about their disease, same as a person with the flu. If you're ill, then you take reasonable precautions not to spread it and to manage the disease in your own life. I don't believe people with HIV should be criminalized or ostracized from society as is the case in many places around the world and in the United States. Laws certainly reflect attitudes toward people with HIV, but as education spreads regarding the condition stigmas should subside, and that is reason for hope.

13. My opinion has changed on . . . because . . . OR My opinion has not changed on any of these issues because . . .

More than whether my opinion has changed (it largely has not changed), I believe my understanding has grown on all these issues. The exercise of having to write from opposing points of view from my own greatly increased my understanding. I was ambivalent on some issues mostly because I just was ignorant of the issues, especially physician assisted suicide. Specifically, I believed that if the state covers medical costs, then of course they should cover euthanasia or physician assisted suicide. But, again, after finding out that the state sent word to a man recently diagnosed with cancer that his treatment wasn't covered, but that assisted suicide is covered just made my skin crawl. No way, no how should that scenario be repeated ever again anywhere. I didn't expect that get the most visceral response from me, but it certainly did. I am 100% in favor of assisted suicide and euthanasia. I am 100% opposed to the government paying for it or advertising the service.