

## In This Issue

**T**HE POWER OF MEDICINE TO DEFINE THE pathological and the normal, and the social consequences attendant upon such determinations, have long been the subject of analysis and debate. Most often, it has been psychiatry that has borne the brunt of such study. Feminist critics have carried the tradition of inquiry much further, extending it to the full range of issues touching on women's health. But the issues are broader still, encompassing a range of questions where medicine has established or has sought to establish its domain.

In this issue of the *Quarterly*, three articles provide different perspectives on this theme. Daniel and Norma J. Wikler offer a searching analysis and critique of medicine's social role in "Turkey-baster Babies: The Demedicalization of Artificial Insemination." How and why did physicians come to define artificial insemination as a procedure requiring their ministrations? How and why did they take on the gatekeeper role of determining the eligibility of women for such procedures? After arguing against such professional dominance, the Wiklers challenge us to confront the question of whether a commitment to reproductive rights is compatible with any social control over artificial insemination. Because of the extraordinarily controversial nature of this article, we have taken the unusual step of publishing two brief commentaries that underscore the crucial ethical and public policy issues that are raised.

Larry Gostin and Robert F. Weir give us a compelling discussion of the power of medicine and the law to define the capacity of individuals and families to make decisions regarding the termination of treatment in "Life and Death Choices after Cruzan: Case Law and Standards of Professional Conduct." Sparked by last year's Supreme Court decision, which permitted states to promulgate exacting conditions under which families could elect to end the treatment of nonautonomous patients, this article provides forceful arguments for reclaiming such decision-making authority from the state. Like the Wiklers, Gostin and Weir stake out the reasons for privatizing decisions that are at the core of the private life.

Robert A. Aronowitz demonstrates, in "Lyme Disease: The Social Construction of a New Disease and Its Social Consequences," that it is

not only with regard to issues of sexuality, death, and mental health that medicine exists on a contested terrain. In a carefully wrought piece of contemporary medical history, Aronowitz details the competing roles of epidemiology and clinical medicine in defining a new medical entity: a new disease.

The politics of health and health care extend, of course, beyond such matters to issues of equity as well as to the epidemiological basis of health-care policy. These are questions to which the *Quarterly* has long devoted itself. Howard P. Tuckman and Cyril F. Chang confront us with the complex issue of how the health-care system can best distribute the burden of providing for a critical type of uncompensated care. "A Proposal to Redistribute the Costs of Hospital Charity Care" is an exercise in policy analysis that takes as its starting point a feature of the American health-care system that marks it as unique among those existing in other advanced democratic societies—its failure to provide universal protection against the costs of illness. Uncompensated care produces the need for "charity," and it is charity that in this case creates the need for public policy.

Finally, Rolla B. Hill and Robert E. Anderson describe the public health consequences of the radical decline in autopsies in the United States in "The Autopsy Crisis Reexamined: The Case for a National Autopsy Policy." Absent a strong commitment to reversing this trend, America will be deprived of a crucial source of epidemiological data necessary for charting effective public health interventions. However, a renewed emphasis on the importance of autopsies will require us to face a host of ethical, religious, professional, and reimbursement issues. In short, sound epidemiology is utterly dependent on what may entail a series of wrenching political controversies.