

Keynote lectures

1390

ETHICAL DILEMMAS IN CANCER CARE

Y. Willems-Cavalli

Division of Oncology, Ospedale San Giovanni, 6500 Bellinzona, Switzerland

Each discussion about ethical issues has to consider the historical and social framework in which this discussion is taking place. Currently, we are for the first time in the history of mankind beginning to experience a pluralistic society, which means in turn a plurality of ethical rules and values. From another point of view, however, we are experiencing increasing difficulties due to decreasing resources because of politically motivated cuts in the health budgets: it is impossible to devote enough attention to ethical aspects if, in our daily practice, we have barely time to ensure appropriate basic care. We should not forget that mainly in the field of nursing, ethics is not only a matter of theoretical considerations, but entails mainly a broad range of practical attitudes. Our care will be ethical, if we are able to provide the patient with all the psychosocial, professional, medical, financial, etc. help he/she needs to be able to cope as well as possible with the disease. Information plays a crucial role in this process. Recent publications have highlighted different methodologies to evaluate quantity and quality of the information given to patients entering experimental studies. These patients represent, however, only a small minority of all cancer patients. How should and how is information given to patients, who are offered "so-called standard treatment"? Very little research has been done on this latter subject. Further questions, which should be evaluated in the near future are: how long should a palliative chemotherapy, which carries side-effects be given? Can terminal care be improved to the point that discussion about euthanasia will be-

come redundant? and: how far should we in any given situation respect the desires and the decisions of the patient? How long can we accept that (some) physicians are less aware of these problems? These are some of the issues (more could be added) which demonstrate that ethical problems remain a constitutive part of the daily professional life of oncology nurses.

1391

R. WELLS AWARD LECTURE: RESTORATION AND RENAISSANCE—THE MEANING AND PURPOSE OF CANCER REHABILITATION

M. Hunter

The Royal Marsden NHS Trust, London & Sutton, U.K.

Thanks mainly to Richard Wells, the concept of cancer rehabilitation has been well defined, widely explored and promoted throughout the field of cancer care.

Yet a truly integrated multidisciplinary cancer rehabilitation concept is still not yet reality in many places. It does not yet rank highly in importance in the minds of many physicians, surgeons and health care professionals working in oncology. Why is this? Perhaps because its meaning and purpose are not clearly understood, perhaps because many of the rehabilitation professionals do not rate oncology as a specialty field and are reluctant to enter it. Perhaps it is not exciting as the development of new treatment modalities or perhaps it is a resource issue.

This paper aims to explore fully the meaning and purpose of cancer rehabilitation and its role to date and to ensure its future in the world of cancer care.