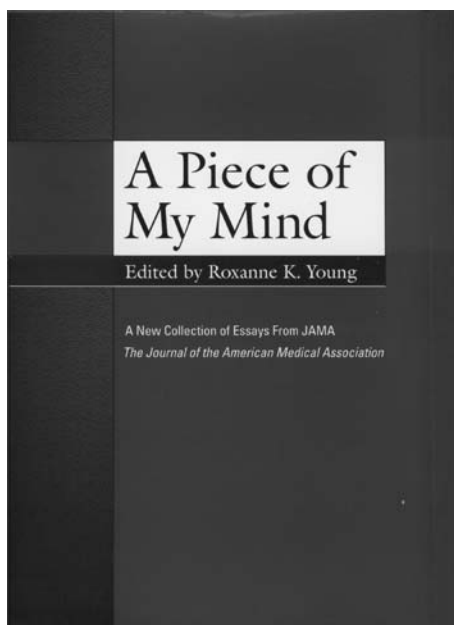


edited by Stephanie Deming and Walter Pagel



A PIECE OF MY MIND: A NEW COLLECTION OF ESSAYS FROM JAMA: THE JOURNAL OF THE AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION. EDITED BY ROXANNE K YOUNG. CHICAGO: AMA PRESS; 2000. 332 PAGES. HARDCOVER \$34.00. ISBN 1-57947-082-3.

More than 15,000 copies of the first *A Piece of My Mind* collection were sold when it was published in 1988. A dozen years later, this new collection should exceed that figure easily.

Council of Science Editors member Roxanne K Young edited this collection of 100 essays, each of which originally appeared in *JAMA*'s popular section "A Piece of My Mind". Almost 1000 such essays have been published over the last 20 years; 10 times as many have been submitted in hopes of publication. According to *JAMA* editor Catherine D DeAngelis, "Everywhere I go, people say that the first things they look at in *JAMA* are 'The Cover' and 'A Piece of My Mind'. These are the soul of *JAMA*."

The book opens with a foreword by Kathryn Montgomery, of the Ethics and Human Values program at Northwestern University Medical School in Chicago. She likens the essays to "a secret history of what it has been like to take care of the ill (or in some stories to *be* ill) at the end of the 20th century".

Whereas the first collection was arranged from birth to death, the new collection, which has five sections, begins and ends with the education of caregivers. The first section, "The 'Practice' of Medicine", begins with "First Day", depicting a terrified third-year medical student whose bewildering and discouraging first day in the cardiac-care unit is redeemed by the kind words of a patient. The book comes full circle with the final section, "The View From Here", which concludes with an experienced patient vowing to "be here for him [his young physician]. It's the least I can do" ("Perspective Shift").

In between, the collection recounts stories about healers and their families affected by illness or death ("All in the Family"), the effects of violence ("The Dark Side"), and patients who have changed healers' lives ("Thanks for the Memories").

A few of the stories are humorous. One, "The Captain", tells of a man with chest pain who agrees to be treated only after the physician convinces the man that he

had served on his ship 30 years before. The doctor keeps the man in the hospital by refusing to tell him what he did on the ship, until the captain-patient is stable enough to be discharged. (The doctor was an able seaman whom the captain had made a pharmacist's mate.)

The bulk of the stories, however, range from bittersweet to downright heartbreaking. They bring up issues of ethics, communications, human decency, and how to maintain a sense of hope in the face of senseless, overwhelming tragedy. In "A Simple Act", for example, a father tells of the ripple effect of donating his son's organs after a random shooting attack that occurred during a vacation. "Strangers come up to us on the street still, tears in their eyes", he notes. More hopeful is that "one man who was close to death now has a new lung because someone was moved by what happened"; others have written the father that what he did kept them from despair.

As must be inherent in such a collection, the tone, quality, and style of the writing vary considerably. Most of the essays are written by physicians, but other caregivers, patients, and the lay public also are represented. Female authors are more prevalent in this edition than in the first, being responsible for about one-third of the stories. The editor has provided helpful follow-up information for a few of the stories. The new collection also includes a thorough glossary, although some of the definitions may not be accessible to a general audience.

Anyone interested in behind-the-scenes stories about health care in America would do well to read this collection. It is rare to find so many perspectives in one work.

Pat French

PAT FRENCH is senior editor at the Duke Clinical Research Institute in Durham, North Carolina, and a freelance editor and writer specializing in health-related publications.



ETHICAL ISSUES IN BIOMEDICAL PUBLICATION. EDITED BY ANNE HUDSON JONES AND FAITH McLELLAN. BALTIMORE: JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY PRESS; 2000. XX + 374 PAGES. HARDCOVER \$55.00, SOFTCOVER \$22.50. ISBN 8018-6314-7 (HARDCOVER), 8018-6315-5 (SOFTCOVER).

In 1995, two articles in *Physical Review Letters* on the “top quark” were published. These two articles had a combined 831 authors. Physicists defended this unusually high number of contributors by stating that the complexity of research required large teams of researchers at universities around the world. Bigger and more expensive research equipment, techniques, and experiments justify high numbers of authors, they said. It seems unlikely, however, that an average of more than 400 authors could have made meaningful contributions to the two articles. Irresponsible authorship, although common, is only one ethical issue in biomedical and scientific publishing that needs to be addressed by improving communication between the biomedical publishers and researchers.

Anne Hudson Jones and Faith McLellan have acted as editors (and contributed articles) for this volume on ethical issues in biomedical publication. Their goal for this volume was to identify important issues in publishing ethics, recapitulate their history and development, place them within the larger ethical issues of scientific conduct, clarify current ethical standards, and summarize the current debates on ethics. In the case of many of the issues, the book offers suggestions for solving problems. The editors’ goal is that the information in the book “will lead to further international discussions and creative solutions” of ethical problems.

The editors divided the book into three parts. The first part presents the major ethical issues in biomedical publication. There are two chapters on authorship (by Jones and Richard Horton), including a new model of authorship from *Lancet*. Two chapters discuss peer review: the evolution of ethical standards for peer review (Fiona Godlee) and how electronic publication is changing peer review (Craig Bingham). Edward J Huth revisits the problems of repetitive and divided publication. Annette Flanagin discusses conflict of interest and what editors and researchers should do about it. In the final chapter of part 1, McLellan examines ethical issues in electronic publication.

Part 2 contains chapters on responses and remedies through the law, policy, and education. Debra M Parrish shows that when there is a breach of ethical procedures, researchers can be pursued through institutional, federal, or legal systems. C K Gunsalas discusses policy issues on scientific misconduct, which often involves the publication process. There is a nodding of agreement in the scientific community that ethical issues are important but a gap in communication between publishers and researchers, and Susan Eastwood and Addeane S Caelleigh supply chapters on educating junior researchers and educating their mentors, respectively.

Part 3 has three commentaries. Paul J Friedman discusses the “larger context of ethical publication and the continuum of practices” that may lead to scientific misconduct and ethical violations. Douglas S DeWitt provides the perspective of a professional researcher. Frank Davidoff suggests future directions that may lead to conflict resolution between researchers and publishers.

The contributors are experienced and knowledgeable about publication ethics and addressing problems. They include journal science editors, managing editors, lawyers, professional researchers, and academicians. They have served on private and public groups and committees that worked to ensure research integrity and made recommendations on ethical issues.

The chapters are heavily referenced, and the topics thoroughly discussed. Anyone unfamiliar with the history and the literature on issues of publication ethics will benefit from this book. The book is indexed and includes a list of key resources.

The book explores the causes of unethical behavior among researchers. Publication is referred to here and elsewhere as “the currency of success”. It is “a measure of merit and accomplishment, critical to advancement”, as Friedman points out. There is funding to justify and egos to keep happy. Academic institutions want to attract the best students, and it doesn’t hurt to have a reputation for the high quantity, if not quality, of research published. Competition

is fierce, and human failings become ethical failings. And publication professionals are not without fault either. Although major international journals aim for high standards, questionable or unneeded papers eventually find a home—often after being rejected several times—by journal editors and reviewers who don't look very closely.

The publications process is a system, and like any system it needs to be refined and improved constantly. Change brings with it uncertainty and new problems. Ethical issues involving cyberspace will continue to develop. Many journals now use the Internet to facilitate peer review. And e-journals will become more common. All those considerations argue for a book like this one to set standards and educate publication professionals and researchers alike.

This book is valuable because it is a meeting ground for both sides of the ethical issues. Each chapter is worthy of a summary of its own, but space does not permit that. The system that comprises research and publication is relatively effective, and most researchers highly ethical. But there are many small transgressions and on rare occasions a serious breach, and each slows the advancement of science.

Ronald W Wolf

RONALD W WOLF is a technical writer and editor. He currently spends most of his time preparing reports on medical technology for Department of Defense hospitals and also has worked as manuscript editor on a number of professional journals and books.

AMA Manual of Style *to Be Revised*; Suggestions Welcome

This year we will begin work on a revision of the *American Medical Association Manual of Style*. If you use our manual and have suggestions on changes that could be made to make the manual more useful to you, please send them to Cheryl Iverson, chair, AMA Manual of Style Committee, at cheryl_iverson@ama-assn.org. The other members of the committee are Stacy Christiansen, Annette Flanagin, Phil Fontanarosa, Richard Glass, Brenda Gregoline, Stephen Lurie, Harriet Meyer, Margaret Winker, and Roxanne Young.

All suggestions are welcome: format, additions, expansions, changes in policy

you'd like us to consider. Also, if you would like to serve as a peer reviewer of the manual (in whole or in part) when it is in draft form, please provide your complete address (name, street address, telephone, fax, and e-mail) along with your suggestions. Thank you in advance for your comments.

Cheryl Iverson
Chair, AMA Manual of Style Committee
American Medical Association
Chicago, Illinois