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BOOK REVIEW

Craig M. Klugman and Pamela M. Dalinis (eds.), *Ethical Issues in Rural Health Care*. Baltimore, Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013 (224 pp.), ISBN 987-1-4214-0955-9, US\$29.95.

Reviewed by Brandi Jean Felderhoff

Patient-centered health care demands that professional decisions be ethical, regardless of discipline. However, less attention is paid to these considerations in certain care settings compared with others. For some practitioners, their only reminder of ethical considerations is the Continuing Education Unit (CEU), which addresses competence in ethics that they are specifically required to obtain. In their book entitled *Ethical Issues in Rural Health Care*, Klugman and Dalinis (2013) bring together experts from the fields of health care, and ethics and bioethics, to address lack of attention to ethical considerations in rural health practice, unique circumstances and major differences between rural and urban settings, and potential techniques for increasing attention to ethical dilemmas by professionals. The editors report that their goal in compiling this book is to initiate a “necessary collaborative conversation on the ethical issues and concerns facing rural health care providers” (pp.xi–xii). Craig M. Klugman is Associate Professor of Medicine and Assistant Director for Ethics and Education at the Center for Medical Humanities and Ethics at the University of Texas Health Science Center in San Antonio. Pamela M. Dalinis, is Director of Education at Midwest Palliative and Hospice Care Center in Glenview, Illinois. She is also the Clinical Bioethicist and ethics consultant at Elmhurst Memorial Hospital, Elmhurst, Illinois.

The book is divided into 12 chapters comprising three sections. The first section provides various interpretations of rurality and the unique challenges that confront the provision of healthcare service delivery in rural settings. These challenges include: 1) limited medical resources, 2) limited personnel resources to address ethical dilemmas, and 3) regular incidents of conflicts of interest. The authors also profile the demography of rural areas of the United States. However the overall emphasis is that each rural community, as a culture in itself, presents its own ethical challenges for health care professionals. Similar to the first section, the second section contains three chapters, each of which is written by a professional (doctor or psychologist) who has worked in rural communities. This section discusses how the professionals came to work in their respective communities, why they chose to practice in the rural areas, and the most challenging ethical dilemmas that they

encountered in their practice. The six chapters that compose the third section investigate specific ethical issues in rural practice and offer potential solutions from the micro level to the mezzo and macro levels of practice. The chapters also include discussions of policy implications.

The content presented in this work is strong and of high quality. The authors base their arguments on multidisciplinary and international research. The chapters are written in clear language. Although the authors use some medical terms, they present the information in a way that makes it easy for the audience to understand the material.

Notwithstanding these positive qualities, some content is difficult to grasp, due to contradictory findings presented in different chapters. Most of this contradictory information is related to demographic profiles of the rural communities studied. Though some contributors described potential reasons for the contradictory findings, it was only accomplished in brief acknowledgment between the chapters. The lack of continuity stands out due to the back and forth nature of the findings presented, as opposed to organization in which one or two chapters would cluster findings on one side of the spectrum and move in subsequent chapters to discussions of findings on the other end of that continuum. The editors also acknowledge that only some issues that exist in rural bioethics are presented in this book.

As previously stated, the editors report that their goal in compiling this book is to initiate a “necessary collaborative conversation on the ethical issues and concerns facing rural health care providers” (pp.xi–xii). The book is of potential benefit to practitioners, educators including doctors, nurses, social workers, and healthcare administrators. The book may also be useful to students at the undergraduate, graduate and postgraduate levels in a healthcare-related disciplines. This book successfully meets its goals as articulated by the authors. Research presented within the book articulates that rural residents comprise a significant part of the U. S. population (anywhere from 12% to 30% and beyond), and these residents are often older, making this discussion extremely relevant for current and future practitioners who must respond to the ever-expanding aging population in the United States. Ethical dilemmas are probably some of the least observed and attended to issues in rural contexts. The attention to detail for specific ethical dilemmas, the narrative chapters written by professionals practicing in rural settings, and the research evidence presented all make significant contributions to the literature and suggest the need for further research.

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

Brandi Jean Felderhoff is a Doctoral Student in the School of Social Work at the University of Texas at Arlington. She holds a Master's and a Bachelor degree in Social Work. She is also a Licensed Master Social Worker in the state of Texas, and has worked in the areas of elder guardianship, hospital social work, inpatient mental health, and hospice and end-of-life care. Her research interests include elderly and end-of-life care, healthcare-related issues affecting the elderly, as well as mental health in active-duty and veteran military personnel and their families. Contact information: Brandi Jean Felderhoff, LMSW, School of Social Work, Box 19129, 211 S. Cooper Street, 313C, Arlington, Texas 76019-0129, USA (email: brandi.felderhoff@mavs.uta.edu).