Bioethics in the News

- General Electric Workers strike over increased medical insurance premiums
  - Why is medical insurance tied to employment?
- Supreme Court argument on whether States can regulate HMO's.
  - Issue: must an HMO accept any doctor who agrees to the rules of the plan?
  - This allows patients to keep same doctor when (e.g.) employer changes HMO.
  - HMO's claim it would increase their expenses.

Kantian Ethics: Key Concepts

- (from last hour) Acts and omissions
- Kant: The "good will"
- Kant: The "categorical imperative"

What makes an action moral?

- For Kant, not the consequences.
- Consequences or results are totally irrelevant to the morality of an action.
- A moral act is one that respects correct moral rules.
- Kant doesn't stress rights, but Kantian ethics, in the spirit of Kant, would.

Categorical Imperative: 2 Formulations

For a rule to be a moral rule, it must be one that

- you could will to universalize.
- treats persons as ends in themselves and not mere means.

“Could will to universalize”

- Rules out actions that would be logically impossible for everyone to follow.
- Example: Never help others but always be helped by others.
- Also ruled out are action possible for everyone to follow, but you "could not will" everyone to follow. Like what?

“Treat others as ends, not mere means”

- Basically: don't use people
- Practical: informed consent for treatment and experimentation.
- Captures idea of inherent dignity of each person that cannot be traded off.
- Kant's vision of perfect society as a "kingdom of ends." (Queencon?)
Criticisms of Kant’s Ethics

- It is too abstract to generate rules that can guide concrete action.
- Kant’s ethics has no way to resolve conflicts of rules (or rights)
- Kantian rules are too rigid. (They fail to consider consequences!)

Think About

- Which ethical theory seems more sound: utilitarianism or Kant’s ethics?
- How might a medical researcher get people to participate in experiments to help other people and still follow Kant’s ethics?
- Kant himself talks about rules, not rights. But how might someone use the spirit of Kant to talk about human rights?
- What would be a nonconsequentialist approach that, unlike Kant, would consider consequences of an action?

Prima facie rules or rights

- An act may have the best consequences and yet be immoral because it violates a moral rule or a moral right.
- The moral rule or moral right is not absolute. It can be overridden by
  - Other rules or rights
  - Overwhelming consequences

Introduction to Euthanasia: Types

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Voluntary</th>
<th>Non-Voluntary</th>
<th>Involuntary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Passive</td>
<td>With clear prior instructions</td>
<td>No instructions; e.g., baby</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active</td>
<td>With clear prior instructions</td>
<td>No instructions; e.g., baby</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Types of Euthanasia

| | Voluntary | Non-Voluntary | Involuntary |
| | Passive | Discussion later | |
| | Active | | |

A Request to Die

Minnie is an 84-year-old woman with severe peripheral vascular disease, and her condition is regarded as terminal. She is certain to die within a week or so. She had refused surgery to remove arterial blood clots a few days earlier. The surgery offered some chance of saving her life, but it also might have required subsequent amputation of parts or all of one or both of her legs. She wanted no part of that, and she says repeatedly that she is ready to die. Throughout her life she has consistently favored euthanasia. Now she is in some discomfort, and she wants the doctor to cause her to die rather than to “let nature take its course.” The family has accepted her terminal prognosis and her wishes. They are at her bedside. They see the choice as one of either deciding the time of her death and being able to say good-bye or else having her die at an unpredictable time, perhaps after suffering pain and possibly alone in the middle of the night. They ask the physician to increase her morphine dose with the purpose of bringing about a peaceful and timely death.

Putting aside current law and religious objections (which Minnie and her family do not embrace) and assuming a physician is available who has no religious or conscientious objections, is there any good reason to regard complying with Minnie’s wishes to be morally inappropriate?