

HONOR AND INTEGRITY

Coverage lets uninsured through cracks

Revolutionary advances in the life sciences have focused media, public and political attention on ethical issues at stake in areas such as stem cell research, assisted reproductive technologies, human cloning and genetic testing, just to name a few.

Surprisingly, far less attention has been paid to an ethical issue that is of arguably greater concern: How do we justly distribute health care in an era of increasing options for technologically advanced treatments and simultaneously increasing cost?

When researching effective ways of treating disease and disability or otherwise increasing quality of life or longevity (and these things certainly do not always go together!), we should be sure to ask, "Who will benefit

REBECCA WALKER
GUEST COLUMNIST

from these interventions?"

Without explicitly addressing this question, advances in the life sciences have the potential to create an even deeper divide between care for the rich and poor in this country.

The problem:

Currently, health care in this country largely is paid for through insurance programs, which may be employer-sponsored, private or government-sponsored, as in the case of Medicare and Medicaid.

This method of dealing with health care leaves more than 40 million Americans without any health-care plan at all. Moreover, coverage for different types of care might be left to historical accident or the political maneu-

vers of interest groups.

When we combine this approach to medical coverage with the fact that health interventions available now already exceed our social ability to cover their costs, we get a recipe for inequity in the distribution of medical resources. When we combine this state of affairs with rapid advances in the life sciences leading to new and potentially expensive technological interventions, we risk deepening this inequity.

Within Medicare alone, advances such as the left ventricular assist device and the implantable defibrillator, both of which can increase longevity dramatically — but at a dramatic financial cost — have led to concerns about how these therapies will be paid for.

If both devices were covered fully for all who need them, Medicare's financial solvency could be threatened.

The solution:

As a society, we must face our responsibility by turning our implicit and haphazard allocation methods into an explicit and justified method of allocation.

Unfortunately, the will to deal with allocation questions does not itself solve the problem, since different and competing values can underlie the choice of particular distribution plans.

Broadly speaking, the two main candidates for a just distribution of health care are egalitarian and utilitarian values.

Utilitarians value the distribution that leads to the highest aggregate welfare, while egalitarians primarily are concerned with

equality of distribution.

Despite significant differences in the practical implications of these theoretical approaches, either underlying value, if adequately implemented, would lead to a system of health-care distribution that is ethically more satisfactory than today's system.

The stark choices at stake in questions of how to allocate medical resources can be troubling and painful to deal with head on. Our country has to some extent been able to ignore these issues by failing to implement any national health-care program.

Such a program would create a stronger need to deal explicitly with questions of health-care rationing as other Western countries have.

Making decisions about how to distribute lifesaving, life-prolong-

ing or quality-of-life-enhancing treatments is not easy. The alternative to dealing with these issues, however, is worse.

Our method has been to turn a blind eye to more than 40 million people in all their health-care needs. Within the ranks of the insured, there is no underlying rationale for how we deal with health-care allocation. When enough public attention is rallied for any particular disease or treatment, we tend to want to treat all of those suffering. But this leaves just as many suffering in silence from as bad or worse conditions.

Isn't it time we do something?

Rebecca Walker,
professor of social medicine,
can be reached
at rwalker@email.unc.edu.

Honesty key to a healthy U.S. economy

We know the concepts of honor and integrity through religious training, or perhaps through school or scouting. We know the Honor Code here at UNC. But do we really understand why these principles are so important to our society? From a quick glance at the headlines in BusinessWeek or The Wall Street Journal, it is clear that a few never learned.

Honor and integrity are fundamental to the success of modern business. Thomas Hobbes, 17th-century British philosopher, stated that without these values, "There is no place for industry (i.e. personal initiative), because the fruit thereof is uncertain." Societies where honor and integrity are the norm unleash personal initiative and enable productive teamwork with benefits for all. However, the selfish actions of a few can undermine the good for the many.

Society developed the rule of law to provide an environment where people can work together with honor and integrity. Legal contracts and other safeguards protect the rights of the honorable against the dishonorable. With protections in place, it is in one's self-interest to act honorably. People benefit from their initiative and teamwork.

Businesses produce better products at lower prices. Society benefits from increased productivity. With contracts and a fair legal system to resolve disputes, businesses can trade with each other confidently. Companies can focus on what they do best. Global electronic marketplaces exist to bring suppliers together to produce goods cheaper, faster and better. We can buy products with greater value and lower prices made by the best suppliers on the planet.

The online auction site eBay flourishes as a similar marketplace. But neither eBay nor the industrial electronic marketplaces could survive if buyers and sellers didn't trust that they would receive "fair value" through transactions. In the event of fraud, they trust the market will protect their interests.

Businesses sell stock to raise capital. Markets have been established to allow shareholders to trade stock. Stock prices reflect the perceptions of the market on

ED CORNET
GUEST COLUMNIST

companies' future earnings. Safeguards have been established. Independent auditors check the books. Independent board members are appointed to protect shareholder rights. The Securities and Exchange Commission watches over everything.

The cases of Enron, WorldCom and a few others provide an illustration of how a few dishonorable people can damage many. Zealous executives fighting for personal bonuses tied to stock price allegedly pressured auditors to accept inflated reports on corporate performance. Auditors hoping to keep their clients happy looked the other way. Board members didn't know or didn't object. The market bid the price of the shares to unrealistic highs. The SEC caught it too late.

When the truth came out, the impact was far-reaching. But even though these firms represented less than 1 percent of the economic value of the entire market, the value of all stocks dropped by more than 30 percent over a matter of months. All shareholders "lost confidence" that what they were being told was truthful. They lost faith that traditional safeguards were adequate to protect them. They were unwilling to risk their capital in situations where honor and integrity could not be assured. They sold, and prices plummeted.

A few made millions at the expense of their shareholders and employees who lost billions. Collectively, the country may have lost trillions. Honor and integrity helped create the value destroyed by the actions of a few.

In the United States, safeguards have been strengthened, confidence is returning and our vigilance will remain high at least for a while. But the best protection is to instill and reinforce honor and integrity as values that are in the enlightened self-interest of each of us. Good for us, good for business and good for society as a whole.

Ed Cornet,
professor of business,
can be reached
at ed_cornet@unc.edu.

EDITORIAL CARTOON

By Brittain Peck, bmpeck@email.unc.edu

the first step in UNC's "HonorCarolina" . . .



Hefty price to pay for plagiarism

Let's pretend that it's 2 o'clock in the morning, your Gumby's pizza has just arrived, and you have a seven-page paper on ethics due the next morning at 9:30 in your philosophy class.

You didn't begin the paper earlier because other things came up. You had to go home last weekend and visit with your significant other, you had exams to study for in your other classes and then you scored tickets to the Springsteen concert on eBay, so you never had time to work on the paper before right now.

What do you do? You could try staying up all night, going to the library, doing the research and turning the paper in on time, but it's hopeless. You have no idea where even to begin, let alone write a paper that would earn a good grade.

You could send an e-mail to your professor and ask for an extension, but she said at the start of the course that she wouldn't accept excuses for late papers. And, honestly, you've had the assignment for more than three weeks now, so why would your professor be sympathetic? Then it hits you: The answer

JONATHAN SLAIN
GUEST COLUMNIST

has been right there in front of you the whole time — the Internet. You surf to Google and type in "ethics." A beautiful, ten-page paper on your topic appears. Now all you have to do is take out three pages so that it fits the length of your assignment and slap your name on the cover. What's the harm in deliberately representing another's words as your own?

Why not plagiarize?

Let me try to answer my own question with a list of the top ten reasons you should not plagiarize:

1. Because it's cheating.
2. Because it's expensive. You are hurting yourself by paying thousands of dollars for an education at Carolina and not even doing your own assignments.
3. Because you hurt your professors. They feel disappointed when students choose not to do their own work. They also get frustrated because they spend a lot of time preparing lessons and assignments. And most importantly, professors are saddened

when they have to participate in prosecuting the very students they love to teach.

7. Because it's embarrassing. You will feel humiliated when you let down your friends and family.

6. Because you get in trouble. The usual sanction given out by the Honor Court for plagiarism is suspension for a semester and an F in the course.

5. Because academic integrity is a core value at Carolina. This University relies on students to do their own research and produce original thoughts, words, and ideas. When we build off the work of others, we give them credit by citing them, and then we provide new interpretation of our own. This process is the foundation of all academic work.

4. Because it's bad business. Nobody wants to go to an attorney who cuts and pastes pieces of the law (without really reading them) into his or her legal brief. Nobody wants their children to go to a doctor who cut corners in medical school. And nobody wants to invest their money in a company whose CEOs lie, cheat or steal.

3. Because it's wrong. I don't think cheaters have anything to add to our community at

Carolina, and I'm glad to say it. 2. Because it is a privilege to be at Carolina. A true Tar Heel, one that really bleeds Carolina blue, doesn't cheat.

And the No. 1 reason why you should not plagiarize: Because our actions have real consequences that affect others — period.

As a fellow student, I know it's hard to do the right thing when it means choosing between getting an A and doing the right thing. There is a lot of pressure to be competitive in college, and sometimes there doesn't seem to be time to write every paper, but once you resort to cheating and you tarnish your reputation, you make a choice that closes a lot of doors to your future.

It's hard to do the right thing when it means taking a zero on an ethics paper, but it would be even harder to be the surgeon who leaves somebody dead because he decided to copy and paste one of his assignments off the Internet.

Jonathan Slain,
UNC student attorney general,
can be reached
at slain@email.unc.edu.

Students weigh in on the impact, value of honor system



Rachel Rosenberg
Junior
Environmental Studies

respect each other enough to do their own work.

Some people will always cheat and some people will never get caught. And the people who do get caught are only a small portion of the people who are actually cheating.

I think the reason people cheat is because of pressure and because not everyone is here for the same reason — to learn. A lot of people are here to get good grades, get a degree and get a job. And for them they'll do whatever it takes. And other people — they're here to learn, and of course they'll do their own work.



Pablo Durana
Sophomore
Undecided

I personally don't have a problem with (the honor system). I think it's nice to have an Honor Code that I hope people would respect, and I think it adds to the school's integrity. There is a big trust element, and for the most part, people do respect it. I don't really see any

big problems with it.

I think it's a matter of how each student perceives it. Some students take it more seriously than others.

I think it's really important. If you can't trust your students and if you don't have an honor system, it really weakens the school.

Trust is a big element of having a good community.

I think there are always imperfections with everything. You would be a little bit naive to expect it to work perfectly.

But I think at this point, it's doing a pretty good job.



Reena Mathew
Junior
Anthropology

I think (the Honor Code) is a good concept, but I don't know if it's really effective.

You have people who sign all the pledges, but that doesn't necessarily mean that they are conforming to it. They're just doing it because they have to.

It is good to have an Honor

Code because some people do take it seriously, and they want to be able sign their name and have the truth. But also there are people who just sign it for the hell of it.

It goes with the code of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. We want people with integrity in our University.

ONLINE

To read how more students regard the impact of the University's Honor Code, check out The Daily Tar Heel online at www.dailytarheel.com