regulation. It will certainly appeal greatly to those with an interest in end-of-life issues, comparative perspectives and interpretations of the concepts of informed consent, self-determination and dignity, and bioethics in the international sphere.

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JOAN McCARTHY, MARY DONNELLY, DOLORES DOOLEY, LOUISE CAMPBELL, and DAVID SMITH, _End-of-life Care: Ethics and Law_  
Cork University Press, 2011, hardback, 460 pp., €25

_End-of-life Care: Ethics and Law_ seeks to provide an ethical framework for decision-making and clinical practice in end-of-life care. The book is the result of a collaboration between University College Cork, the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland, and the Irish Hospice Foundation (p. 9). As an Irish endeavour, the framework aims to support ethically and legally sound clinical practice in this sector of medical care in Ireland (p. 9). As the framework features bioethical principles and ideals which are internationally recognised, together with universally relevant clinical dilemmas, the book has much to commend it to those outside Ireland. The book draws together contributions from ethicists, legal experts, theologians, sociologists, and clinicians who have collaborated on each module to bring together the various facets which form the framework. Together, they have created an ethical framework which derives from international research and bioethical doctrines, alongside Irish research which specifically focuses on ethical issues within Irish hospitals (p. 4).

Aimed at health professionals, allied professionals, healthcare ethics and law lecturers, and students, the framework is divided into eight modules that identify and consider a range of issues relevant to end-of-life care. Each module includes case studies to encourage the reader to apply the framework to the various dilemmas faced by health workers in this context, together with activities at the conclusion of each module to further encourage engagement and reflection. The framework begins with an introductory module (‘Explaining Ethics’) which provides a background in health care ethics and theory as a foundation for the subsequent modules which draw from the theories (Module 1). A spectrum of views over what constitutes a ‘good death’ is included, in a useful attempt to identify the elements of end-of-life care most crucial to facilitating a good death in a culturally diverse society (p. 4). For example, the way that the Catholic religion has framed the way in which many Irish people engage with death is considered alongside other influences, such as Muslims’ beliefs about death (p. 29). Following this, the most significant ethical theories, such as utilitarianism, deontological moral theory, and principlism, are set out in a clear and accessible format (pp. 39–52). The reader is well guided through the theory, and the module provides an excellent introduction for new comers to bioethics.
With the foundations set out in Module 1, the remaining sections focus mainly on specific aspects of end-of-life care. Module 2 provides an extremely valuable exploration of the challenges of breaking bad news, which should be essential reading for all health care professionals. The relevant ethical concerns are raised within the arguments for and against confronting patients with accurate information at the end of life. For example, the potential ethical conflict between respecting the autonomy of a patient who has asked to be told, against shielding the same patient because the family hope to avoid causing distress at a vulnerable time, are explored through a number of case studies aimed to develop an appreciation of the issues (p. 84). ‘Healthcare Decision-making and the Role of Rights’ are the subject of Module 3, with an interesting examination of the complex landscape of rights which have become increasingly important both in this context and more generally throughout the provision of medical care. A range of rights are explored in this section, including the distinction between positive and negative rights and substantive legal rights (both Irish and international human rights), with some consideration of cases, such as Glass v UK. Again, via their practical approach, informed by both clinical research and bioethical theory, the authors succeed in making a difficult topic appear relatively comprehensible.

The subsequent three modules (Modules 4–6) deal with the associated issues of ‘Patient Autonomy in Law and Practice’, ‘The Ethics of Managing Pain’, and ‘The Ethics of Life-Prolonging Treatments (LPTs)’. It is interesting that the principle of autonomy has an entire module devoted to it when the notion of autonomy or self-determination is clearly central to many of the other modules; yet, this is obviously reflective of the primacy of autonomy in health care ethics. Perhaps unsurprisingly, therefore, these three sections feature some overlapping of issues. Some of the matters addressed, for example the doctrine of double effect and euthanasia, are dealt with fleetingly in both Modules 5 and 6, and the organisation of these sections could be improved in order to avoid any element of repetition, especially if a differently ordered arrangement would enable a more detailed examination of the issues. Despite this minor criticism, the substance of all three sections are highly pertinent within such a framework and Modules 5 and 6, in particular, provide essential ethical guidance for a range of scenarios with respect to achieving the primary goal of facilitating a good death.

The final two modules concern ‘The Ethics of Confidentiality and Privacy’ (Module 7) and ‘Ethical Governance in Clinical Care and Research’ (Module 8). The nature of the duty of confidentiality requires greater focus on the law, which Module 7 provides in clear terms, while also continuing the reflective and critical ethos of the framework. One interesting section of this module focuses on different dimensions of privacy (for example, physical, informational, decisional, expressive), which further encourages the practitioner to engage with various aspects of privacy from the patient’s perspective (pp. 361–364). Finally, Module 8 explores the important issue of ethical governance. The function and governance of ethics committees is considered, from both an international and Irish perspective. Some experiences from the USA, where the

1 ‘The Ethics of Breaking Bad News’.
development of such committees is generally more advanced, provide a particularly useful comparative perspective. Research ethics committees are also considered (very briefly) in this module, before attention is turned to the practical work undertaken by ethics committees, with more case studies and learning tools to encourage further reflection.

Overall, this text provides a valuable resource for health care professionals in Ireland and beyond. The theoretical ethical content is excellent, drawing from a diverse range of international sources to promote a meaningful understanding of the relevant principles and ideals. Moreover, the use of case studies drawn from national research encourages the reader to engage with the framework in the unique context of end-of-life care, especially in Ireland. Those who are more specifically concerned with the law, or who are looking for a detailed legal framework, should note that the focus of this book is on the ethical issues with (sometimes) only quite superficial attention to the law. Nevertheless, those entering health care or allied professions will find the framework particularly useful as it presents an accessible yet comprehensive tool to guide the practitioner through the diverse challenges of end-of-life care. A detailed and carefully considered ethical framework is provided, with clear and concise legal guidance. Even the experienced health care professional should find much to appreciate in this text, particularly as the focus on reflective practice facilitates a patient-centred approach which can so often be lacking in over stretched hospitals where traditions from a more paternalistic era may, unfortunately, still prevail.

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Birth Rites and Rights is the ninth in a series by the Cambridge Sociolegal Group and the product of a three-day workshop held in 2010. The book is divided into four parts, with the first two parts covering the experiences, rites, status, and consequences of birth and the latter two exploring the issues that arise after birth and the timing of birth. A range of practitioners, researchers, academics, and PhD students have contributed to this book, some of whom have been or are members of the assisted reproduction regulatory body (the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Authority), or have sat on ethics committees for the Department of Health, British Medical Association or Royal Colleges. Members of the Birthlight Trust and British Pregnancy Advisory Service have also contributed to the book, but other voices who have long been members of policy and practice debates over childbirth and reproduction are surprisingly absent; for example, the National Childbirth Trust and the Association for Improvement in Maternity Services. Nevertheless, the collection includes work from several well-known researchers in the broad field of childbirth and reproduction, such