

Editorial

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While quite a few medical doctors, nurses and jurists belong to our association, the “Japanese Association for Philosophical and Ethical Researches in Medicine”, was established mainly by experts of ethics who were engaged in teaching ethics at medical colleges. A majority of ethics experts come from philosophical fields. Studies of medical ethics or bioethics as an applied ethics are affected by this philosophical influence. There are two tendencies of studies: On one hand there are ethical studies that respond to needs and problems of actual situations found in medical practices. On the other hand, there are ethical studies that focus on fundamental concepts or principles. The latter emphasis on moral concepts and principles, at least for a while, distances the thinker from actual problems or actual situations.

This issue also reflects these two tendencies. A typical study responding to the actual needs of medical staff represents Itai’s paper on clinical ethical consultation; there are research ethics committees at every university hospital or medical institution in Japan. However, at medical institutions, even among university hospitals, there are few clinical ethical departments tasked with consulting both patients and medical staff. As we can easily imagine, consultations are not only about the problems discussed at academic debates, but about subtle psychic

problems or communication gaps.

Studies on fundamental concepts and understanding are embodied in Morishita's paper, which thematizes a concept of health, and also in Mushiaki's paper, which deals with problems regarding moral enhancement. Health, though, we know and often assume a working definition for everyday life; as well, health as a concept is given a definition by WHO, Yet the concept of health is one of the most difficult concepts to explain. Pondering on this concept is not merely an abstract word play, when we see that disability studies try to understand impairments or disorders as aspects of personality.

Moral enhancement has shown up recently, as a new phenomenon in the field of bioethics. Enhancements of moral faculties or capacities remain yet as a pure possibility. Why is a technique – imaginative at present - important? It remains to be seen. But we can tell one thing in advance. To examine merits and demerits of moral enhancement leads to the following questions: where lies our moral disposition? Of what does our morality consist?

In this issue, there are further two other papers, which focus on problems that are usually dealt with through public health studies: One is Okita's paper on prevention of HIV infection; in this article, a new biomedical prevention of HIV – antiretroviral therapy - is introduced and examined. Okita's paper analyzes a new preventive from ethical point of view: For instance, what kind of influences concerning the consciousness of infections and sexual relations does a new preventive have?

The other one, Yamamoto's paper takes a low-dose radiation exposure as the theme. Bioethics has not appropriately studied the

Fukushima's disaster of radioactivity. This is the paper's departing thesis and moves the study forward. What and how can the bioethics examine in the context of the Fukushima event? The paper reflects on this question. Readers have an opportunity to consider some questions about the relation between public health and bioethics.

This new journal incorporates topics from practical needs at the level of actual medical situations to fundamental moral principles, from particular clinical questions to public health policy and social ethics. Hopefully in this issue, the great diversity of bioethics can be discerned and the possibilities in this diversity appreciated.