



# **Allocating Scarce Medical Resources: Roman Catholic Perspectives (Clinical Medical Ethics series)**

*H. Tristram Engelhardt Jr.*

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Roman Catholic moral theology is the point of departure for this multifaceted exploration of the challenge of allocating scarce medical resources.

The volume begins its exploration of discerning moral limits to modern high-technology medicine with a consensus statement born of the conversations among its contributors. The seventeen essays use the example of critical care, because it offers one of the few areas in medicine where there are good clinical predictive measures regarding the likelihood of survival. As a result, the health care industry can with increasing accuracy predict the probability of saving lives?and at what cost.

Because critical care involves hard choices in the face of finitude, it invites profound questions about the meaning of life, the nature of a good death, and distributive justice. For those who identify the prize of human life as immortality, the question arises as to how much effort should be invested in marginally postponing death. In a secular culture that presumes that individuals live only once, and briefly, there is an often-unacknowledged moral imperative to employ any means necessary to postpone death. The conflict between the free choice of individuals and various aspirations to equality compounds the challenge of controlling medical costs while also offering high-tech care to those who want its possible benefits. It forces society to confront anew notions of ordinary versus extraordinary, and proportionate versus disproportionate, treatment in a highly technologically structured social context.

This cluster of discussions is enriched by five essays from Jewish, Orthodox Christian, and Protestant perspectives. Written by premier scholars from the United States and abroad, these essays will be valuable reading for students and scholars of bioethics and Christian moral theology.

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