

Kushner, Tomasine. (2010). *Surviving Health Care: A Manual for Patients and Their Families*. NY: Cambridge.

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Thomasine Kushner is a bioethicist at the California Pacific Medical Center Program in Medicine and Human Values. Co-editor of the *Cambridge Quarterly for Healthcare Ethics*, she is author (with David Thomasma) of *Birth to Death: Science and Bioethics*, *Asking to Die: Inside the Dutch Debate about Euthanasia*, and *Ward Ethics: A Case Book for Doctors-in-Training*.

This book is an excellent resource for anyone with questions about accessing health care. The work is comprehensive and yet not overly technical. The editor includes chapters with numerous suggestions to prepare a health care consumer to address common health care issues. The central theme is for consumers to be informed so they can be more active in the treatment process as well as advocate for quality care.

Specific topics include selecting a doctor, understanding common treatment issues, engaging in the treatment process, and preparing for the end of life. The text also focuses on navigating the medical system during treatment for medical emergencies, transplantation, psychiatric illness, Alzheimer's disease, terminal illness, and natural/human disasters. Finally, medical issues specific to children and elders are addressed with ethical issues that can arise during the provision of medical care addressed throughout the book.

The ethical issues addressed are too numerous and complex to review. However, ethical issues related to end-of-life care are discussed in several chapters of the text. The issue of end-of-life care becomes particularly salient when a patient is unable to consent to treatment. This can make the treatment process more difficult for loved ones, particularly when a patient's wishes have not been discussed or documented beforehand.

Hence, advanced planning is reviewed at length to show how individuals might clarify what medical procedures are acceptable to prolong life and what defines an acceptable quality of life that would justify the continuation of care. There are templates for paperwork that may be useful for the reader to document health information, checklists that summarize additional considerations, and recommended steps to prepare for an emergency.

This book is most useful as a topical reference. As a whole, I believe the text would benefit from a re-ordering of contents, perhaps, along the continuum of care. There could be the addition of chapters to address common medical events such as pregnancy, cancer, and stroke. It would also be helpful to include more discussion about health conditions, access to healthcare, and healthcare processes that may vary relative to patient gender, race, or religion.

In summary, this book is an excellent resource for social work students, practitioners, and educators interested in medical social work. The material included in this book provides a comprehensive, but quick,

reference on health care issues that can be used over and over again. This book also presents ethical issues that are central to the delivery of health care, which, given their complexity, can be used to stimulate further discussion.