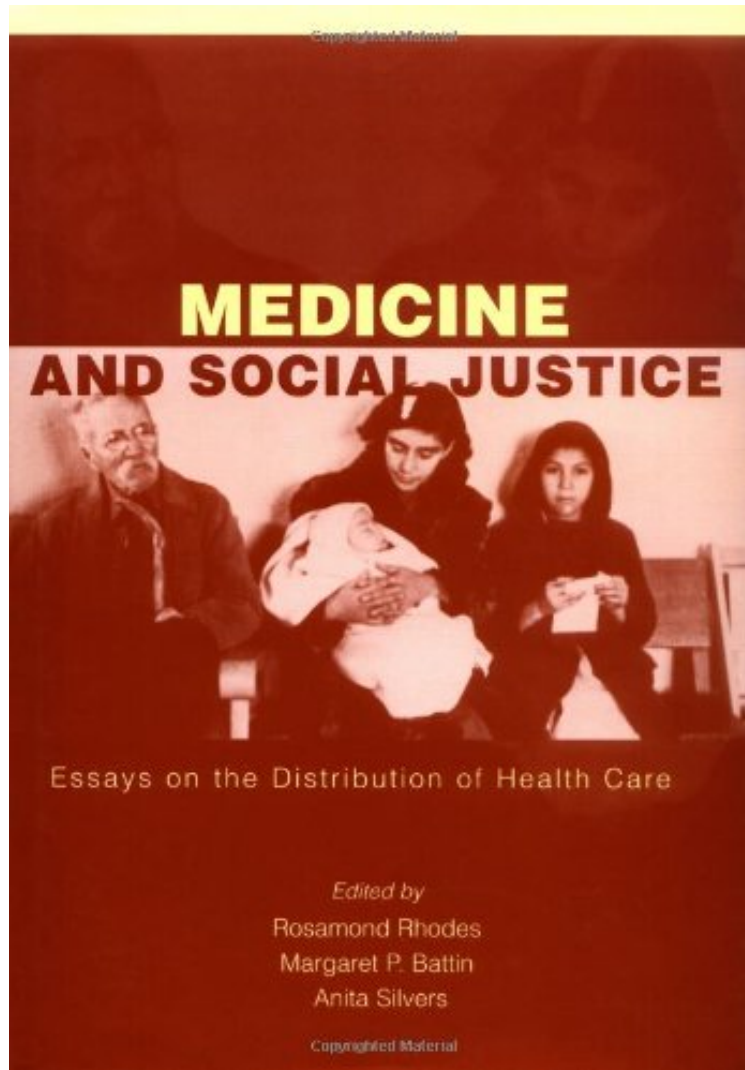


# Medicine and Social Justice: Essays on the Distribution of Health Care

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**From Brand: Oxford University Press, USA : Medicine and Social Justice: Essays on the Distribution of Health Care** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Medicine and Social Justice: Essays on the Distribution of Health Care:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Of historic significance. By R. R. Hixson Well organized and developed historical data on medicine and social justice. The two concepts have sometimes done battle against each other but these early times in our history reveals a lot about the character of our ancestors. A book that stands its

ground on the library shelf with Ruger's Health and Social Justice.

Because medicine can preserve and restore health and function, it has been widely acknowledged as a basic good that a just society should provide its members. Yet there is wide disagreement over the scope of what is to be provided, to whom, how, when and why. In this uniquely comprehensive book some of the best-known philosophers, doctors, lawyers, political scientists, and economists writing on the subject discuss the concerns and deepen our understanding of the theoretical and practical issues that run through the contemporary debate. The first section lays a broad theoretical basis for understanding the concept of justice, particularly as it relates to the distribution of health care. The second section critically examines how medical care is distributed in different countries around the world and the particular advantages and injustices associated with those systems. The third section draws attention to the special needs of different social groups and the specific issues of justice that are raised by the impact of various policies on health care distribution. The concluding section delves into the dilemmas that confront those designing health care systems--the politics, the priorities, and the place of desires as opposed to needs in a socially just scheme.

From The New England Journal of Medicine Is health care a right? If so, what duties does this right confer on health care systems and on societies? Since an unlimited right to all services is unaffordable, even in the United States (where spending on health care in 2001 exceeded 14 percent of the gross domestic product), where, and by whom and what means, should the line be drawn? With more than 40 million U.S. citizens without health insurance, is the health care system in this country fundamentally immoral? When the medical director of a health maintenance organization or the chief executive officer of a hospital makes decisions about allocating resources, what is a fair, just, and defensible process? Bioethicists, heretofore focused on thorny issues in individual patient care, are now beginning to assess the ethical underpinnings of the allocation and distribution of resources in health policy and health care organizations. They are joined by philosophers, lawyers, economists, physicians, and political scientists in *Medicine and Social Justice*. This compilation brings a variety of perspectives, national settings, and disciplinary backgrounds to the topic and provides a unique survey of theoretical and applied thinking about the connections between health care and social justice. The first of the book's four sections is an introduction to various theories of justice and their connection to health care. Anyone who cares about justice in health care should read the first chapter, by Norman Daniels. His approach to fairness in health care builds on the late John Rawls's theory of justice yet is also informed by the empirical study of health insurers in action. In the second section, which examines the fairness of health care systems around the world, Bruce Vladek and Eliot Fishman offer an engaging overview of the U.S. health care system, with a particular focus on Medicare. This essay (along with Roger Crisp's, on the British National Health Service) illustrates the tensions between ideal theory and practical realities -- the problem of "partial compliance." Baruch Brody's chapter on the ethics of clinical trials in developing countries, though interesting, seems out of place here. The third section of the book addresses the special issues of vulnerable groups: minorities, women, the disabled, children, the elderly, caregivers, and poor persons. Since the problem of social justice in these groups is acute, many of the chapters in this section assess the special role (if any) of health care in the context of these social disadvantages. The final section analyzes and raises provocative questions about current and emerging challenges in health care. Should alternative medicine be included as a covered benefit? What is a fair way to organize the distribution of organs for transplantation? (Rosamond Rhodes's chapter rightly criticizes some aspects of the policy of the United Network for Organ Sharing but leaves the reader wondering whether other countries, with more "just" health care systems, also have "fairer" systems for allocating organs.) Who should have priority, those in the worst health or those with the most to gain? Dan Brock's chapter on this subject clearly lays out the issues, while Jerome Bickenbach's chapter dissects and critiques the World Health Organization framework for assessing health care systems across countries. He (and other authors) fear that disability-adjusted life-years, quality-adjusted life-years, and life expectancy may slide from usefulness as analytic tools and become unjust applications that systematically and subtly discriminate against the disabled and those in poor health. Any book with "social justice" in its title will tend to tilt to the left; libertarians will find little here to their liking, aside from Bernard Baumrin's chapter, which flatly asserts that there is no right to health care, and Paul Menzel's chapter, which offers a defense of liberty-preserving health policy. Most of the authors reside in the United States or the United Kingdom; more than half have appointments in departments of philosophy. Physicians and others interested in this field will find this book an engaging introduction to the theoretical and practical challenges pertaining to social justice and health care. Those seeking to delve deeper into the topic may find additional nourishment from Rawls's *Justice as Fairness: A Restatement* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001) and Amartya Sen's *Development as Freedom* (New York: Knopf, 1999). The collection of essays in *Medicine and Social Justice* can serve as a fine primer for courses in bioethics and comparative health systems. Lewis G. Sandy, M.D. Copyright copy; 2003 Massachusetts Medical Society. All rights reserved. The New England Journal of Medicine is a registered trademark of the MMS. "When read from cover to cover, it offers an extremely broad survey of perspectives on the issue of healthcare access around the world. This book is an excellent resource."--Doody's "This compilation brings a variety of perspectives, national settings, and disciplinary backgrounds to the topic and provides a

unique survey of theoretical and applied thinking about the connections between health care and social justice. Physicians and others interested in this field will find this book an engaging introduction to the theoretical and practical challenges pertaining to social justice and health care."--New England Journal of Medicine

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