



What Makes a Good Doctor?: A Patient's Perspective

Max Griffiths

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Every person in the course of his or her life has some contact with the medical profession. And in recent years that profession has been revolutionised in the fields of research, of technology and of practice. Hardly has one advance been declared than it is superseded by another. At the same time, while community attitudes themselves change, group practices have taken some weight from doctors but perhaps have diminished the doctor/ patient relationship of previous years. Another change in the oversight of the medical profession has been the growth of what is called medical ethics. What, for example, is the amount of information a doctor should give a patient prior to performing an experimental procedure? Amongst all these changes there are still fundamental issues where doctors have to use their personal judgment as to what to do or what to say. For Max Griffiths this is where ethical considerations become matters of medical morality. He outlines a broad range of situations which frequently confront both doctor and patient, requiring sympathetic understanding on each side. Some of these arise out of the radical changes which have occurred in community attitudes and practices. Abortion and euthanasia are two important examples. Others range from growing pains and teenage trauma to ageing and dealing with dying and with loss. From his extensive associations with patients in a wide variety of situations the author tackles those issues which demonstrate what makes a good doctor. The result is a book that is for doctors and patients alike. Max Griffiths' involvement in medical matters range from responsibility for outback hospitals in places like Birdsville, Oodnadatta, Halls Creek and Fitzroy Crossing to long term membership of the board of the Austin Hospital in Melbourne. In this latter capacity he chaired committees responsible for the oversight of medical research, especially the protection of patients' rights. He was also involved in similar committees at the Royal Children's Hospital in Melbourne and the Royal Darwin Hospital. As a long term minister of religion his visits to his parishioners both at home and in hospitals gave him a deep insight into their anxieties. He was also a foundation member of Ronald McDonald House and chairman of several institutions engaged in the care of children with disabilities. [Subject: Sociology, Health Care, Medical Ethics]

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