



# What Patients Teach: The Everyday Ethics of Health Care

*Larry R. Churchill, Joseph B. Fanning, David Schenck*

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Being a patient is a unique interpersonal experience but it is also a universal human experience. The relationships formed when we are patients can also teach some of life's most important lessons, and these relationships provide a special window into ethics, especially the ethics of healthcare professionals. This book answers two basic questions: As patients see it, what things allow relationships with healthcare providers to become therapeutic? What can this teach us about healthcare ethics? This volume presents detailed descriptions and analyses of 50 interviews with 58 patients, representing a wide spectrum of illnesses and clinician specialties. The authors argue that the structure, rhythm, and horizon of routine patient care are ultimately grounded in patient vulnerability and clinician responsiveness. From the short interview segments, the longer vignettes and the full patient stories presented here emerge the neglected dimensions of healthcare and healthcare ethics. What becomes visible is an ethics of everyday interdependence, with mutual responsibilities that follow from this moral symbiosis. Both professional expressions of healthcare ethics and the field of bioethics need to be informed and reformed by this distinctive, more patient-centered, turn in how we understand both patient care as a whole and the ethics of care more specifically. The final chapters present revised codes of ethics for health professionals, as well as the implications for medical and health professions education.

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