

CONTEMPORARY BIOETHICS: ISLAMIC PERSPECTIVE

By Mohammed Ali Al-Bar and Hassan Chamsi-Pasha. 267 pp. Springer International Publishing (1st Edition), 2015. Paperback, ISBN 978-3-319-18427-2, \$ 57.51

© Springer Science+Business Media New York 2016

The authors of the book have an impressive knowledge and extensive experience on Islamic religious sources and legal–ethical rulings on various topics of clinical importance. The contribution made by them is critical for medical professionals in particular and larger public that is needy of biomedical topics to the moral dilemmas of decisions related to health, life and death in Muslim societies. The authors have admirably interwoven religion with medicine to provide a sense of ethical–legal discourse on biomedical issues. They have given examples from multiple resources from Islam and other religions as well as books and research to support their ideas and establish a clear understanding of the topic to the readers.

The book is divided into three parts. The first part gives extensive overview of important topics from Islam Bioethics and legal jurisdiction with appropriate examples from history and rulings of Muslim jurists and bioethicists on offering solutions to different medical cases and biochemical issues. Second part concentrates on objectives of Shari’ah (Islamic ruling) and shades light on principles of biomedical ethics from an Islamic perspective. The final part of the book discusses selected hot and controversial topics of biomedical concern with Islamic point of view. The book ends with glossary of the terms given at the end of it. There are some parts of the book which might be contradictory to the opinion of some people, but the authors have presented them in a tactful and logical way that one would certainly ponder over them.

In the first chapter, authors have introduced the readers with concepts related to Islamic legal–ethical tradition. Meanwhile, they have given a superficial touch to the topics to be discussed in detail in the later chapters of the book. Chronology of juridical methodology for resolving bioethical issues has been discussed in detail in this chapter. The authors have added numerous studies from different countries dealing with Islamic legal methodology and jurisprudence. The second chapter of this book is very versatile in itself. The authors have discussed ethics and morality with a greater detail starting from Islamic basics till the mysticism. Gender equity and predestination have also been discussed so as to establish a clearer view to the readership from other religions about Islam. Chapter 3 of the book is totally concerning Islamic law. It deals with the Shari’ah (Islamic law) and Usul al fiqh (Fundamentals of Islamic jurisprudence). Preservation of five religious objectives and man’s sanctity as God’s vicegerent on earth has also been discussed in this chapter. The chapter 4 surrounds issues on morality, importance of intentions, virtues, integrity, knowledge, experience, conscientiousness and so forth. These topics have been integrated with biomedicine and are explained with very comprehensive examples. The final chapter of this part is on medical oaths and ethical codes. Starting from Hippocratic Oath, the chapter leads to many important jurisdictions internationally and from Islamic perspective. The

best part of this chapter is examples on how these codes had been violated in biomedical research in the past.

I will be concise on second part of the book which revolves around four interrelated principles of biomedical ethics from an Islamic perspective namely autonomy, nonmaleficence, beneficence and justice. God gave a degree of autonomy to human beings to choose between things. There is no compulsion in religion and autonomy is everyone's right. "Above all no harm" (to any living being including animals) is really important to quote because nonmaleficence is important than beneficence. There is, however, no punishment for unintentional harm because intentions are of core importance in Islam. The social beneficence is a very important part and worth a read. The final chapter is the beauty of this part of the book. Authors have presented in this chapter, injustice done in various nations and cultures and its consequences, commented on wars and their impact on health, put light on maldistribution of wealth and have given some amazing facts about the world particularly addressing very strong and powerful countries of the globe. The authors' use of the term justice "the lost value" is clearly defended through their marvelous work in this chapter.

The third part starts with chapter 10 "abortion." Abortion without any genuine and serious reasons is clearly forbidden in Islam. Killing an innocent person is as if killing the whole of humanity. There are different rulings about abortion in Islam; the important to mention is about ensoulment (120 days). Abortion should not be used as a method of population control in Islam. It is an inhumane and cruel act. Chapter 11 is about fertility issues. It is human nature to want children. Islam gives strong emphasis to increasing fertility and seeking remedy for infertility. Concept of legal adoption does not exist in Islam; this means that the real parents are real; it implies to all cases discussed here. Involvement of third party and all kinds of surrogacy is forbidden in Islam. The chapter ends with discussion on gender selection, which is only God (not humans) to decide in Islamic viewpoint. The next chapter is also related to progeny and family. Islam puts selection of compatible couples at a greater importance to increase their generation. Consanguinity and factors leading to genetic disorders are discouraged in Islam. Islamic teachings focus on prevention more than the cure of a disease. It is important to know that the illness is not God's punishment but to testify the follower and reward hereafter. Gene therapy, genetic engineering and stem cell research have been addressed with conditions where they are allowed and where prohibited. Cloning is conflicting and contradictory to Islamic beliefs, and Islamic ruling on it also is discussed. DNA fingerprinting is then discussed followed by some unanswered dilemmas. All in all, anything legitimate and in accordance with nature as created by God and which may benefit human is allowed in Islam.

The chapter 14 is on organ transplantation. Islam encourages seeking cure and not to despair. Organ donation is very old and had been practiced by Muslims. The authors have put forward fatwas (Juridical Resolutions) and Islamic standing on organ donation. Donation is an act of charity whereas suicide is condemned in Islam. Chapter 15 is on "change of state"-Death. Islamic consensus on brain death is still lacking, but these issues have been addressed and discussed by Muslim scholars and bioethicists. Western world, however, has been successful to address these controversies according to their context. The authors conclude that Muslim bioethicists need to be updated and deepened in context to Islamic ruling on brain death. The final chapter of the book is quiet detailed and lengthy. End of life issues have been discussed in a greater detail here. The case of Terri Schiavo is a fantastic example presented by the authors to support their proceeding concepts. Role of nonmaleficence is cornerstone of all medical ethics. Islam encourages withdrawing futile treatment modalities that would not benefit the patient and saves the patient from end of life suffering and starving to death. Importance of Wasayah and Wakalah is discussed, and dignity of terminally ill patient is also discussed very well. The chapter ends with very hot topic "Euthanasia"—the mercy killing—which is strictly prohibited

by all schools of thought in Islam considered equal to killing the person. Suicide is also condemned in Islam, and the person who does it will be punished for doing so.

Being a Muslim, I came across many new things about Islamic bioethics in medical issues that I did not know before. The authors are from Saudi Arabia—the center for whole Muslims—which is a positive point for them. There were few areas where the authors had repeated the same point and it sounded more like exaggeration. However, the book is worth reading for people of all cultures and religions as it would be helpful to know about the biomedical practices and regulations in Muslim world.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

Conflict of interest The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

Human and Animal Rights This article does not contain any studies with human participants or animals performed by any of the authors.

Informed Consent Informed consent was obtained from the book authors prior to this review.

*A. R. Memon, DPT, MPhil (✉)
Institute of Physiotherapy and Rehabilitation Sciences,
Peoples University of Medical and Health Sciences for Women,
Nawabshah, Sindh, Pakistan
e-mail: dpt.aamir@gmail.com;
memon.aamir@pumhs.edu.pk*