



UPPSALA
UNIVERSITET

Just Health Care?

VI Annual Swedish Symposium on Biomedicine, Ethics and Society

Sandhamn Hotell & Konferens, May 24-25, 2004

Karen Lebacqz
Graduate Theological Union
P.O. box 2413
95460-2413, Mendocino, CA, USA
klebacqz@mcn.org

Justice in Health Care: Five views from the clinic

Examination of 11 clinical studies conducted under the auspices of the Program for Health Care Relationships (a partnership between Yale University and the University of Connecticut, sponsored by the Donaghue Medical Research Foundation) reveals that clinicians have at least five different ways of understanding justice. I have categorized these views as follows: (1) justice as equality (for example, equal access to care); (2) justice as a "preferential option for the poor"; (3) justice as empowerment of the patient; (4) justice as equity or individualized care; and (5) justice as resistance. This paper will begin with a brief overview of the 11 clinical studies, primarily emphasizing the diversity of the studies. For example, some focused on women suffering depression, some on children with chronic diseases such as diabetes, and some on adult men with HIV disease. Some studies focused on new technologies, such as computerized feed-back systems to reward those who take medicines regularly; others focused on the 'human' elements in health care. Some dealt with cross-cultural issues in delivery of appropriate care; others looked at how diseases are imaged and understood. None focused specifically on justice issues. Yet I believe that investigators often held strong views about justice that influenced the structure and focus of their studies. The emphasis of my talk will be on these five views of justice that emerge in clinical settings, and I will argue that a full approach to justice in the clinical setting requires attention to all five of these dimensions.