

Preface

The question of whether there might be a duty to die was first raised by Margaret Battin in 1987 in her ground-breaking essay, "Age Distribution and the Just Distribution of Health Care: Is There a Duty-to-Die?" In 1997 the issue was reprised when two new articles appeared on the topic written by John Hardwig and the other by former Colorado Governor Richard D. Lamm. Given the renewed interest in the topic, as well as its undeniable importance, *Biomedical Ethics Reviews* sought to initiate an in-depth discussion of the issue by soliciting articles and issuing a general call for papers on the topic "Is There a Duty to Die?" The twelve articles in this volume represent the ultimate fruits of those initiatives.

The first seven essays in this text are sympathetic to the claim that there is a duty to die. They argue either: (a) that some form of a duty to die exists, or (b) that arguments that might be offered against the existence of such a duty cannot be sustained. By way of contrast, the last five articles in the text are critical of duty-to-die claims: The authors of the first three of these five articles attempt to cast doubt on the existence of a duty to die, and the writers of the last two essays argue that if such a duty did exist, severe problems would arise whenever we attempted to implement it.

"Is There a Duty to Die?" is the seventeenth annual volume of *Biomedical Ethics Reviews*, a series of texts designed to review and update the literature on issues of central importance in bioethics today. For the convenience of our readers, each article in every issue of *Biomedical Ethics Reviews* is prefaced by a short abstract describing that article's content. Each volume in the series is organized around a central theme; the theme for the next volume of *Biomedical Ethics Reviews* will be "Privacy and Health Care." We hope our readers will find the present volume of *Biomedical Ethics Reviews* to be both enjoyable and informative, and that they will look forward with anticipation to the publication of "Privacy and Health Care."

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