and tests, and the many references to online resources, this book would make a great addition to a personal physician’s library as a reference book. The cost of $147 may be prohibitive for individual medical students and residents, but it would be a great addition to a medical school or residency program library.

The physician’s role of caring for patients is changing. Personalized medicine will use the patient’s genetic, epigenetic, family history, dietary, environmental, and lifestyle factors to identify the patient’s risks for disease and tailor screening, prevention, and treatment plans. Genetic and genomic testing is but an additional powerful tool, and the authors did an excellent job explaining how to use it.

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**Ethics for International Medicine: A Practical Guide for Aid Workers in Developing Countries**  
Anji E. Wall  
Lebanon, NH, Dartmouth University Press, 2012, 190 pp., $27.95, paperback

Medical ethics is an important field. Unfortunately, the majority of medical ethics writings assume the abundant financial, material, and personnel resources found in Western metropolitan health care settings. While underlying ethical principles are consistent, their applications can look quite different in austere settings such as rural practice, disaster scenes, and global settings. This current offering by Dr Wall is a welcome addition to the ethics literature and fills a critical gap.

The focus of this book is specifically short-term medical missions. While there are other global health situations to which an in-depth discussion of ethics is warranted (national health policies, long-term expatriate involvement, medical research, medical education, etc), the emphasis of the present work is important and is a niche that has been largely neglected.

The author identifies five considerations ("elements") for ethical decision making: the stakeholders, the medical facts, the goals and values, the norms, and the limitations. Based on these considerations, the chapters of the book unfold.

This volume is not a dry recitation of ethical principles; it is written in an engaging case-based style. Following a brief introduction of the element that is the chapter's topic, actual historical case scenarios are presented illustrating that element. These cases are then discussed from the perspective of all five elements, not just the one that is the focus of the chapter. Don’t look for simplistic “do this” answers. The author establishes guiding principles allowing the reader to learn how to determine the proper course of action in the case, as well as in future cases that their practice will bring their way. Dr Wall skillfully uses these cases to illustrate and develop in the reader the thought process of ethics in these settings.

While presenting ethical decision making in the context of trans-cultural, resource-poor settings, the author in no way compromises the foundation of medical ethics. Statements such as, “It is important that medical aid workers do not adopt the attitude that any care is better than no care at all and that they are able to exercise prudent decision making, even when confronted with patients who have no other alternatives,” and, “While it is a hard concept for medical aid workers in international medicine to come to terms with, not intervening is sometimes a better option than intervening,” provide insight that would help aid workers avoid a myriad of unethical actions.

An important point in the book is the author’s call for a paradigm shift away from the “body count” approach to international medical aid. While in contemporary Western health care, quality improvement and patient-oriented outcomes are becoming the focus, when Western health care workers venture abroad, it seems this part of our collective brain shuts off. “The body-count mentality encourages speed and efficiency rather than efficacy in patient care. Rather than having the explicit goal of treating as many patients as possible, medical aid workers should adjust their focus to comprehensive patient care, health personnel education, and medical infrastructure development so as to maximize the benefits to the patients they encounter and create sustainable, lasting change in the areas where they
serve.” Sadly, much of this misplaced emphasis on numbers is driven by the sponsoring organizations who measure their success (and upon which their funding is based) solely on numbers. Ethical care demands that we abandon the numbers approach. Indeed, our domestic private and governmental health care systems would do well to learn this point.

One omission from this book that I hope will be included in the next edition is a discussion of motivation for service abroad. This is a topic important to the ethics of international medical aid. Everyone involved in international medical aid has an agenda. Whether it is one’s pride—a chance to be the “great foreign savior,” a desire for a broader scope of practice—perhaps with less accountability, religious or humanitarian ideals, or political agendas, all face the potential of ethical conflicts. These “ulterior motives” are universal and inescapable and are not incompatible with ethical international medicine. However, learning how to identify one’s motivations, and to reconcile them with the provision of ethical care, is an important aspect of international medical ethics. The addition of a chapter specifically on “The Stakeholders” (the only one of the five elements not given its own chapter in the current edition) would neatly remedy the sole criticism of this reviewer.

In summary, Dr Wall has given us an eminently readable, practical, and relevant guide to thinking ethically about international medical missions. I wholeheartedly commend it to your attention.

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