# Ethical Challenges in Medical Practice: Reflections and Critiques



**Ethical Lapses in the Medical Profession**

A recent opinion essay by Dr. Carl Elliott, published on May 8, 2024, in The New York Times, highlighted continuing ethical issues within medical education and practice. Responses from various professionals provided their perspectives and experiences on this troubling subject.

Robert Hausner, a retired neurology resident from Mill Valley, California, recounted an incident from the early 1970s where he and a fellow resident faced a moral dilemma involving psychosurgery on a prisoner. The procedure, which involved brain surgery to alter behavior, was canceled after they anonymously alerted the press, resulting in public protests and legislative action on obtaining informed consent from prisoners.

Doug Pasto-Crosby, a retired emergency room physician from Nashville, criticized the ingrained culture in medical schools that grants more privilege to doctors over patients. He recounted instances during his training where attending physicians reprimanded him for expressing empathy towards patients.

Dr. Ronald W. Pies, a psychiatrist and medical ethicist from Lexington, Massachusetts, expressed concerns about physician-assisted suicide, citing examples from Colorado’s End-of-Life Options Act. He argued that severe anorexia nervosa patients, suffering from cognitive distortions, likely cannot provide informed consent for such procedures, exacerbating ethical issues within the medical culture.

Other letters tackled broader ethical concerns, noting that similar moral lapses can be seen in other fields like business, where executives may overlook broader societal impacts.

This discourse underlines the persistent and complex nature of ethical challenges in medical practice and education.