

Ethics and Justice of Age-Based Rationing of Health Care

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Abstract

As a result of various reasons, including aging and the rise of life expectancy, health care costs in the United States are spiraling out of control, to reach 26% of GDP by 2030.

Various critics find it unjust that society allocates a disproportionate amount of society's scarce resources on the unproductive elderly. Critics like Callahan and Lamm, utilizing utilitarian concepts of justice, propose the age-based rationing of health care as the only just solution to this dilemma. This suggestion has give rise to a response on the part of Cassel, Etzioni, et al who, utilizing egalitarian notions of justice (Kantian, Rawlsians, etc), oppose age-based rationing of H.C., believing that it leads to intergenerational conflict, discrimination against women, etc.

Finding this debate significant, I argue that it must continue, particularly among those teaching health care policy and administration. Thus, I decided to study the views of a sample of 18 such professors; through interviews and their responses to 14 questions that sought their views about age-based rationing. The study, which led to some eight themes and a theoretical construct, utilized grounded theory in a qualitative methodology approach.