Preface

We have thoroughly revised this edition of Principles of Biomedical Ethics, taking account of suggestions by friends and critics, developments in moral, social, and political philosophy and in biomedical ethics, and new issues in research, medicine, and health care.

We have modified the book's structure in order to accommodate the needs of diverse readers. Chapter 1 now introduces our framework through a discussion of moral norms, with particular attention to prima facie principles and rules and to specifying and balancing them for moral deliberation and decision-making. Chapter 2 focuses on moral character, especially moral virtues and ideals, which are too often neglected or downplayed in biomedical ethics. The next four chapters (Chapters 3 through 6) present four basic groups of principles—respect for autonomy, nonmaleficence, beneficence, and justice. Chapter 7 examines the moral rules of veracity, privacy, confidentiality, and fidelity in the context of relationships between health care professionals and patients and between researchers and participants in research. We have retained our examination of methods and theories in biomedical ethics, now including a detailed explication and defence of our preferred method and theory. These topics appear in the final two chapters (8 and 9). We believe that this revised edition will be more accessible to readers who do not come to the subject with substantial background in moral theory. Those grounded in or more interested in moral theory may choose to examine the last two chapters immediately after the first two chapters.

With each edition, our debts of gratitude grow. We remain indebted to colleagues and students who provided suggestions, insights, cases, and so forth for previous editions, though we cannot identify all of them by name here. In addition to the valuable discussions of our framework in various books and articles, numerous students, colleagues, health professionals, and teachers who use the book have contributed immeasurably to this fifth edition. In particular, we want to thank John Arras, Marcia Day Childress, the late Dan Clouser, John Fletcher, Bernie Gert, Jonathan Moreno, and Sven Sherman-Peterson for direct questions, challenges, and critiques, as well as supportive conversation. Moheba Hanif has provided remarkable assistance, as has the staff of the Kennedy Institute’s library and information retrieval system. Jim also expresses his deep appreciation to Ezekiel Emanuel, Frank Miller, and other colleagues in the Department of Clinical Bioethics at the National Institutes of Health, where he was a visiting scholar in 1999-2000; the department provided a most stimulating and enjoyable context for much of his work on this edition.

We also want to take this opportunity to express our deep gratitude for our wonderful relationship with Jeffrey House, our editor at Oxford University Press, who has worked with us on different editions of this book for over a quarter of a century.

We dedicate this edition, just as we have dedicated each of the previous four editions, to Georgia, Ruth, and Don. Georgia, Jim’s wife, died in 1994, just after the fourth edition appeared. Our dedication honours her memory and pays tribute to Ruth Faden and Donald Seldin.

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