On Wednesday, March 31, 2021, Jim Tabery, PhD, and Peggy Battin, PhD, MFA, led an Evening Ethics discussion on ethics issues surrounding COVID-19 vaccine distribution. This discussion was divided into four topical categories: (1) state variation, (2) line jumpers and what to do about them, (3) vaccine hesitancy, and (4) vaccine passports.

The robust discussion contained information and insights that remind us to identify goals and to continue working toward achieving them. Tabery led the first segment, discussing different methods of vaccine roll out among the states. The group discussed priorities and methods of distribution, including, but not limited to, a utilitarian approach—administering as many vaccines to the greatest number of people—compared to an egalitarian approach—administering to those who need them most. Priorities differed among states: in the initial roll out, for example, Utah prioritized teachers for vaccination, which was not necessarily the case in other states. Additionally, some states considered incarcerated individuals in their vaccination distribution order, but many did not. Tabery raised other considerations of fairness, effectiveness, and potential to spread the disease in decisions about who to prioritize. Leslie Francis, PhD, JD asked, “What is going to be the most effective way of reducing disease spread?” She explained that a utilitarian distribution might not be the most effective way to reach herd immunity if those most likely to become sick and then spread COVID-19 are not identified. A sick individual might not necessarily be someone who then spreads the disease if they are not out in the community.

Next, the group explored whether something should be done about individuals jumping the vaccine distribution line. Battin illustrated the complexity of line jumping by analogizing two extremes, skipping the line at the airport with assigned seating, compared to jumping the queue for an organ transplant. She posited that the first example may be bad manners, the latter a grave moral wrong, and that COVID-19 line jumping likely falls someplace in the middle.

In a thoughtful exploration of vaccine hesitancy, Tabery noted that initially, one-fourth of the general public expressed hesitancy toward receiving the COVID-19 vaccine, but that hesitancy rates often decrease over time. This has been due to carefully addressing the multiple, varied reasons why people hesitate to get vaccinated. One clinician shared her experiences of recovering from COVID-19 with long-term effects from the disease versus getting vaccinated. She explained that sharing her experience with skeptical friends, colleagues, and patients often helps them to realize that potential side effects from the vaccine are better than the long-term effects of COVID-19, reducing their vaccine hesitancy. This experience illustrates that individuals trust their care providers, church communities, and individuals they know with first-hand experience more than radio ads or public service announcements.

Despite concerns about vaccine passports, Battin reminded the group that they serve a dual purpose. That dual purpose includes enabling travel and access to social environments as well as a mechanism to control transmission. The passport discussion included concerns about inequity, privacy, risk of forgery, and individuals unable or unwilling to receive the vaccine juxtaposed with overarching questions about effectiveness.

Continued on page 2
**Evening Ethics Discussions**

These informal, multidisciplinary discussions about current issues in medical ethics take place approximately bi-monthly or as ethical issues arise. A PMEH member facilitates discussion. Guided by the topic, we invite people with relevant expertise and experience and informed opinions to join us. Generally about 15-60 people from a variety of disciplines, including healthcare, public policy, philosophy, law, and business attend. We distribute short, timely articles from the nation’s most thoughtful newspapers, journals, blogs, and magazines to the group in advance of our discussions. CME is offered.

Watch for Evening Ethics events coming in August!

**Ethics Issues of COVID-19 Vaccine Distribution—continued from page 1**

Keeping the ultimate justification for vaccine distribution foremost in our minds—the goal of herd immunity—inform our ethical thoughts about the four categories we discussed. One participant noted that if our justification is utilitarian, issues of just desert, privilege, and line jumping may not be as influential in our decision-making. As an important reminder, it was emphasized that as vaccinations increase, patience with mask-wearing may decrease, indicating that we might feel a problematic sense of certainty based on vaccine effectiveness. Use of strategies and universal precautions (i.e., mask-wearing, social distancing, good ventilation, and vaccination) together increase the probability of successfully eradicating COVID.

**Program Members on the Road and In Print—continued from page 6**

John Francis and Leslie Francis’ book, Sustaining Surveillance: The Importance of Information for Public Health, is published and now available.

In March, Susan Sample’s book Voices of Teenage Transplant Survivors: Miracle-like was published by Emerald Publishing: Now available.

Peggy Battin has been participating in the Johns Hopkins Berman Center for Ethics BRIDGES collaboratory project on blurring the boundary between infectious and genetic diseases, 2nd meeting January 30, 2021.

Brent Kious and Peggy Battin presented, “Ending One’s Life in Advance? Facing Alzheimer and Other Dementias” for the University of Pennsylvania’s Penn Memory Center and the Penn Program for Precision Medicine for the Brain, February 4, 2021.

“Ending One’s Life in Advance” by Brent Kious and Peggy Battin has been accepted by the Hastings Center Report, and will appear in the May/June, 2021 issue.
Each year, first-year medical students at the University of Utah complete an Artistic Interpretation assignment for Layers of Medicine, a required core course that explores important aspects of humans providing care to humans: ethics, arts and humanities, culture and cultural humility, access to health care, and much more. The objective of this artistic interpretation is for students to critically address concepts presented during their first year of training through non-didactic approaches. Students are encouraged to think of “art” in broad terms and focus on the process of learning and exploring ideas and creative techniques. PMEH Chief Gretchen Case and her course co-directors, Karly Pippitt and Awais Riaz, are pleased to share two artworks from current MS1s, along with short statements explaining their inspiration and approach.

Layers of Cathedral Rock by MS2024 Amy Loret. Artist’s statement: While hiking Cathedral Rock in Arizona during Spring Break of my MS1 year, I was inspired by the natural layers of the rock formations. This spiritual place reminds me of the importance that clinical touch has in medicine, as reflected in the various techniques incorporated in the painting.

A Pill-less Solution by MS2024 Kylee LeBaron. Artist’s statement: The process of dyeing eggs with whole food ingredients took approximately 18 hours. It would’ve been easier to use a pre-made dye kit, much like it’s easier to prescribe a pill rather than treat the patient as a whole. But the value of one is much greater than the other.
In May, we’ll discuss Shauna Devine’s *Learning from the Wounded: The Civil War and the Rise of American Medical Science* (2014). Devine understands that we typically wince at the subject of the wounded in the Civil War and the medical treatment they received. But she also makes the case that American medicine advanced enormously during the conflict. This progress took many forms: a more pervasive knowledge of anatomy, the use of experimental methods to treat injury and disease, and the development of medical research and specialization. Devine’s study provides a fascinating historical perspective on 19th-Century medicine in this country, including the rise of medical education. We are confident the book will be of genuine interest to our group of engaged medical readers.

In considering Devine’s book, Mark Matheson has thought often about the poet Walt Whitman’s service in Civil War hospitals. In addition to discussing Devine’s work when we get together, he hopes to talk just a bit about Whitman’s accounts of his experience. When the War was over, Whitman wrote a prose work called *Democratic Vistas*, a passionate vision of the transformative future he believed American Democracy could achieve. He notes that it was his experience in the hospitals of the Union Army that led him to write the book: “I know not whether I shall be understood, but I realize that it is finally from what I learn’d personally mixing in such scenes that I am now penning these pages.” He goes on: “One night in the gloomiest period of the war, in the Patent office hospital in Washington city, as I stood by the bedside of a Pennsylvania soldier, who lay, conscious of quick approaching death, yet perfectly calm, and with noble, spiritual manner, the veteran surgeon, turning aside, said to me, that though he had witness’d many, many deaths of soldiers, and had been a worker at Bull Run, Antietam, Fredericksburg, &c., he had not seen yet the first case of a man or boy that met the approach of dissolution with cowardly qualms or terror. My own observation fully bears out the remark.”

“Let no tongue ever speak in disparagement” of the American people, Whitman declares at the end of this passage, “to one who has been through the war in the great army hospitals.”

After visiting her friend who is hospitalized with cancer, the narrator in Sigrid Nunez’s novel, *What Are You Going Through*, reflects on her friend’s troubled relationship with her adult daughter and thinks: “This is the saddest story I have ever heard.” The narrator, like her wry friend, is an unnamed middle-aged woman, yet she is quick to name a movie, a musical, another story “the saddest” of all time. So, it is surprising that the novel, which revolves around her friend’s plan to end her own life and the narrator’s acquiescence to help, is not itself sad. Rather, it is an insightful, compassionate, and often humorous story about relationships, the meaning of life, love, and the limits of language. It is, as the narrator says of a movie, “a beautifully told story [that] lifts you up.”
Sleep is often a topic of conversation—mostly when we haven’t slept enough. Many often think of sleep as a luxury. While eight hours of sleep is desired, it is primarily aspirational for many Americans. The pace of modern life has overwhelmed our days to the point where something has to go, usually restful slumber. Others, suffering from various ailments, rarely have satisfying sleep patterns. The past year especially has highlighted our sleep habits as they have shifted with our lifestyles during the time of COVID. Sleep today embodies cultural, medical and economic issues that saturate our society.

In *The Slumbering Masses*, Matthew Wolf-Meyer undertakes American sleep, an unusual topic, from an anthropological perspective. As an outsider looking in, he critically examines American views about sleep habits, and challenges us to think about them within the context of history and culture, including that of medicine. His book provides insights into sleep disorders and how they are treated based on three years of fieldwork in a sleep clinic.

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**PMEH Calendar of Events**

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<tr>
<th>Event</th>
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<th>Facilitator</th>
<th>Zoom Link</th>
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<tr>
<td><em>The Physicians Literature and Medicine Discussion Group  6:30 pm</em></td>
<td>Wed. May 12</td>
<td>Shauna Devine, Facilitated by Mark Matheson, DPhil</td>
<td><a href="https://utah.zoom.us/j/97100573404">https://utah.zoom.us/j/97100573404</a></td>
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<td>Learning from the Wounded: The Civil War and the Rise of American Medical Science</td>
<td>Wed. June 9</td>
<td>Sigrid Nunez, Facilitated by Susan Sample, PhD, MFA</td>
<td><a href="https://utah.zoom.us/j/96872021111">https://utah.zoom.us/j/96872021111</a></td>
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<td>The Slumbering Masses: Sleep, Medicine, and Modern American Life</td>
<td>Wed. July 14</td>
<td>Maureen Mathison, PhD</td>
<td><a href="https://utah.zoom.us/j/9872257654">https://utah.zoom.us/j/9872257654</a></td>
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*Evening Ethics and Ethics Resident Conferences—coming in August*
Program Members on the Road and In Print

Jim Tabery and Dana Carroll (Biochemistry) were on abc4 news talking about gene-editing and ethics.


Brent Kious presented comments at the first annual UNC Philosophy of Psychiatry conference, April 10, 2021.

Peggy Battin will give a virtual keynote address at the annual conference of the International Association for Philosophy of Death and Dying, (IAPDD) (July 2021)


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