

Editor's Introduction

Lawrence O. Gostin

The year 1992 marked the 20th anniversary of the American Society of Law & Medicine (ASLM). The roots of the Society go back some 80 years to February 23, 1911, when the Massachusetts Society of Examining Physicians was established. The Society's 20th anniversary year was the occasion of a development of major significance: the Board and membership voted to change the Society's name to the American Society of Law, Medicine & Ethics.

The impetus for the name change came with the growing realization that a significant part of the Society's work—the journals, conferences, and Supreme Court *amicus* briefs—involved ethical thought in evaluating health policy.

The new name more accurately conveys the identity and work of the Society. From its genesis ASLM focused significant and ongoing attention on the interface of law, medicine and ethics, albeit with clear emphasis on medical legal expertise and content. At times in the Society's history it maintained a bioethics clearinghouse and published a medical ethics newsletter. Today almost every conference and the majority of its published materials include ethics as a major or minor emphasis.

The Society has distinguished itself from other bioethics groups by bringing substantive legal scholarship to the area of bioethics. ASLM has been a source of information for physicians, nurses and others grappling with major social issues which involve both legal and ethical questions. Similarly, legal experts who encounter ethical issues while working in the medical field seek guidance through the Society's conferences, publications and other resources.

We believe the name of the organization is important because it should fully represent the mission of the organization to prospective members and prospective donors and to other collegial organizations.

Law, Medicine & Health Care is regarded by many as the Society's flagship journal. Over the years, *LMHC* evolved from the Society's two original publications—*Medicolegal News* and *Nursing Law & Ethics*. The term "health care" emerged when the two publications consolidated to form *LMHC*. *Law, Medicine & Health Care* has continued to publish high quality essays on a range of issues in health policy, law and ethics.

In order to better inform our readers of current developments in health law, we have begun a cooperative venture with the Harvard Law & Medicine Society of Harvard Law School and the *American Journal of Law & Medicine* at Boston University School of Law (BUSL). These law students will apprise our readers of recent legislation, regulation and case law in health law and policy. The current developments section of *LMHC* began with Harvard Law School's contribution in our last issue, and continues with BUSL in this issue.

Beginning with the next issue, *LMHC*'s name will change to reflect both the Society's name change and the journal's broader scope. The publication will become the *Journal of Law, Medicine & Ethics*. This development is being marked by an expanded Board of Editors and a renewed assurance of high quality scholarship, debate, and critical thought at the intersection of law, medicine, policy and ethics.