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Clinical Realities and Moral Dilemmas: Contrasting Perspectives from Academic Medicine in Kenya, Tanzania, and America

INTRODUCTION

PHYSICIANS IN UNIVERSITY HOSPITALS in Africa face a fundamental moral crisis: hospitals are overwhelmed by patients dying from AIDS, and physicians have few resources to respond. In such settings, not only do physicians face very specific moral dilemmas—how to ration scarce resources and acquire costly medications, how to inform families that a child is HIV positive—but the very moral foundations of medicine as a scientific and caring profession are called into question. Practicing medicine and training new physicians in such settings produce profound ethical dilemmas.

On the surface, the situation in teaching hospitals in North America could hardly be more different. Resources for high-technology medical practice are abundant, though not unlimited. Physicians and medical students see a wide range of dis-

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