MEDICINE AFTER THE HOLOCAUST
Knowledge for Today

Sheldon Rubenfeld M.D.
Eugenics: Definition

- Oxford English Dictionary (OED) defines eugenics, the term coined in 1883 by Francis Galton, Charles Darwin’s cousin, as “the science [sic] dealing with factors that influence the hereditary qualities of a race and with ways of improving these qualities, especially by modifying the fertility of different categories of people.”
- Positive eugenics: encourages the transmission of more desirable genetic traits.
- Negative eugenics: discourages the transmission of less desirable genetic traits.
Eugenics: Definition

- Practical positive eugenics or, in Germany, practical positive racial hygiene:
  - Encourages medical care for the superior races.
  - Encourages procreation for the superior races.
- Practical negative eugenics or negative racial hygiene:
  - Discourages even inexpensive medical care for the inferior races.
  - Discourages procreation for the inferior races.
- Eugenics is as old as the Bible itself.
Eugenics in Antiquity

- A new king arose over Egypt, who did not know of Joseph.
- “Behold! The people, the Children of Israel are more numerous and stronger than we.”
- The king of Egypt said to the midwives of the Hebrews, “When you deliver the Hebrew women, and you see them on the birthstool, if it is a son, you are to kill him, and if it is a daughter, she shall live.”
- “But the midwives feared God and they did not do as the king of Egypt spoke to them, and they caused the boys to live.”
Eugenics in Antiquity

- Plato, referring to Asclepius, the Greek god of medicine and healing, says in *The Republic*, “But he makes no attempt to cure those whose constitution is basically diseased by treating them with a series of evacuations and doses which can only lead to an unhappy prolongation of life, and the production of children as unhealthy as themselves. No, he thought no treatment should be given to the man who cannot survive the routine of his ordinary job, and who is therefore of no use either to himself or society.”
Eugenics in Antiquity

- Aristotle argued in his *Politics* that killing children was essential to the functioning of society. He wrote, “There must be a law that no imperfect or maimed child shall be brought up. And to avoid an excess in population, some children must be exposed. For a limit must be fixed to the population of the state.” (Recall the attempted infanticide in *Oedipus Rex* by Sophocles)
Greek Values (contd)

- Hippocratic Oath:
  - Invocation of ancient Greek deities.
  - Relationship to teachers and other physicians.
  - The end is benefit to the sick; do no harm.
  - No euthanasia or abortions, even if asked.
  - Consult those with greater expertise.
  - No voluntary injustice, mischief, or sexual deeds.
  - Patient privacy.
  - Covenant and (almost a) prayer.
Eugenics in the U.S.

- Slavery was woven into the fabric of American society and the U.S. Constitution.
- 1847: AMA is founded.
- The Civil War 1861-1865.
- Jim Crow (and miscegenation) laws and the “one-drop” rule followed in 35 states from 1876-1965.
- 2008: “The American Medical Association (AMA) today apologizes for its past history of racial inequality toward African-American physicians, and shares its current efforts to increase the ranks of minority physicians and their participation in the AMA.”
Eugenics in the U.S.

- Charles Darwin publishes *Origin of Species* in 1859.
- Natural selection: process by which heritable traits that make it more likely for an organism to survive and successfully reproduce become more common in a population over successive generations.
- Watershed event in biological determinism in general and in racial science in particular.
- Argued against the unity of man based on the Adam and Eve story (creationism or intelligent design vs. evolution)
- Galton, Darwin’s cousin coins the term “eugenics”.
Medicine After the Holocaust

- In the 1880s, Chancellor Otto von Bismarck under Kaiser Wilhelm II introduced health insurance, accident insurance, and old age and disability insurance into the Western world by to:
  - Increase allegiance to the state.
  - Undermine socialists threatening the monarchy by reducing or blurring the tension and conflicts between social classes.
  - To provide for the “social good.”
- The old age pension program was for those over 65 at a time when life expectancy for the average Prussian was 45 years.
Eugenics in the U.S.

- 1900: Three European botanists discover the 1866 paper by the Augustinian Monk Gregor Mendel describing how traits were inherited in peas.
- Rediscovery of Mendel’s genetic research provided a scientific patina and intellectual respectability to eugenics, an idea that became orthodox thinking in the highest circles of American academe (David Starr Jordan and Charles Eliot, presidents of Stanford and Harvard), science (Alexander Graham Bell, Nobel Laureate Alexis Carrel), government (Presidents T. Roosevelt and Wilson), law (Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr.), social activism (Margaret Sanger), and philanthropy (Carnegie, Rockefeller, Harriman, Kellogg).
Eugenics in the U.S.

- 1907: Indiana passes the first state compulsory sterilization law.
- 1910: Mrs. E.H. Harriman, mother of the future governor of New York, funded the Eugenics Record Office (ERO) at Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory. Under Harry Laughlin and Charles Davenport, the ERO becomes the leading promoter of American eugenics, receiving funds from the Carnegie, Rockefeller and Kellogg foundations.
Eugenics in the U.S.

- Eugenic Journals
MEDICAL EDUCATION
IN THE
UNITED STATES AND CANADA

A REPORT TO
THE CARNEGIE FOUNDATION
FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF TEACHING

Bull no 4

BY
ABRAHAM FLEXNER

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
HENRY S FRITCHETT
PRESIDENT OF THE FOUNDATION

BULLETIN NUMBER FOUR

375 FIFTH AVENUE
NEW YORK CITY
Eugenics in the U.S.

- 1910: At the request of the Carnegie Foundation, Abraham Flexner published *Medical Education in the United States and Canada* (“The Flexner Report”), which “Germanized” American medical schools from proprietary schools operated more for profit than education to the German model of strong biomedical sciences together with hands-on clinical training—the number of American medical school dropped to 31 and graduates dropped from 4400 to 2000. By 1935, there were 66 American medical schools, virtually all adhering to the (German) model that we are familiar with today.
Eugenics in America (contd)

• “We pledge ourselves to work unceasingly in state and nation for...The protection of home life against the hazards of sickness, irregular employment, and old age through the adoption of a system of social insurance adapted to American use.” (Theodore Roosevelt addressing the convention of the Progressive Party in 1912)

• “I agree with you...that society has no business to permit degenerates to reproduce their kind...Some day, we will realize that the prime duty, the inescapable duty, of the good citizens of the right type, is to leave his or her blood behind him in the world; and that we have no business to permit the perpetuation of citizens of the wrong type.” (Theodore Roosevelt in a letter to Charles Davenport in 1913)
Eugenics in the U.S.

- 1915: Anna Bolinger gave birth at German-American Hospital to a baby with extreme intestinal and rectal malformations. The delivering physician awakened Dr. Harry Haiselden, the hospital’s chief of staff, who decided the baby too afflicted and fundamentally not worth saving. Surgical treatment was denied.

- Dr. Haiselden is censured by his medical society but not for the first public euthanasia of an infant (23 years before the first in Germany) but for publicizing this and other similar deaths.
Eugenics in the U.S.

- Madison Grant was a lawyer in New York and a conservationist as well as a eugenicist. He was friends with and influenced the thinking of Theodore Roosevelt and Herbert Hoover.
- Many German scientists were avid fans of Madison Grant and accepted all of the major tenets of his scientific racism.
- Grant argued for the superiority of the Nordic race, which he suggested was a master race.
- A disgruntled corporal in the German Army who was also an extreme nationalist, race biologist and advocate of a master race wrote a fan letter to Grant thanking him for writing *The Passing of the Great Race* and telling him that “the book is my Bible.” The corporal was Adolf Hitler.
Eugenics in the U.S.

• 1921: Margaret Sanger formed the American Birth Control League (ABCL), the forerunner of Planned Parenthood whose aims included:
  • Research “concerning the relation of reckless breeding to the evils of delinquency, defect and dependence.”
  • Aid public agencies “in the study of maternal and infant mortality, child-labor, mental and physical defects and delinquence in relation to reckless parentage.”
  • “Sterilization of the insane and feeble-minded and the encouragement of this operation upon those afflicted with inherited or transmissible diseases.”
Eugenics (Immigration) in the U.S.

- 1924: Harry Laughlin of CSHL’S ERO testifies in Congress in support of the eugenically-oriented Immigration Restriction Act, which limited the immigration of “dysgenic” Italians and eastern European Jews and prohibited the immigration of East Asians and Asian Indians.

- From *Mein Kampf*: “There is today one state in which at least weak beginnings toward a better conception are noticeable. Of course, it is not our model German Republic, but the American Union, in which an effort is made to consult reason at least partially. By refusing immigration on principle to elements in poor health, by simply excluding certain races from naturalization, it professes in slow beginnings a view which is peculiar to the fokish state concept.” A. Hitler 1925
Eugenics (Sterilization) in the U.S.

1922: Harry Laughlin publishes his “Model Eugenical Sterilization Law, which is passed in 1924 in Virginia as “The Sterilization Act.” Laughlin’s act was drafted to withstand a challenge to compulsory sterilization in the United States Supreme Court.

1927: In its Buck vs. Bell decision of May 2, 1927, the United States Supreme Court upheld Virginia’s law providing for eugenic sterilization for people considered genetically unfit, with Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., writing for the 8-1 majority:
Eugenics (Sterilization) in the U.S.

“We have seen more than once that the public welfare may call upon the best citizens for their lives. It would be strange if it could not call upon those who already sap the strength of the State for these lesser sacrifices, often not felt to be such by those concerned, in order to prevent our being swamped with incompetence. It is better for all the world, if instead of waiting to execute degenerate offspring for crime, or to let them starve for their imbecility, society can prevent those who are manifestly unfit from continuing their kind. The principle that sustains compulsory vaccination is broad enough to cover cutting the Fallopian tubes. Three generations of imbeciles are enough.”
The governors of California, Virginia, Oregon, North Carolina and South Carolina have acknowledged and apologized for their sterilization laws.
Eugenics in the U.S.

• In 1933 a Berlin correspondent for JAMA) wrote: “Since sterilization is the only sure means of preventing the further hereditary transmission of mental disease and serious defects, this (German Sterilization) law must be regarded as an evidence of brotherly love and of watchfulness over the welfare of coming generations.”

• Whereas 60,000 sterilizations done in USA, approximately 400,000 were done in Germany, prompting Dr. Joseph DeJarnette, a witness in Buck vs. Bell and superintendent of Virginia's Western State Hospital, to observe in the Richmond Times-Dispatch in 1934: "The Germans are beating us at our own game.”
Adolf Hitler
als Arzt des deutschen Volkes
Von Dr. med. Stephan, Partenkirchen
Medicine After the Holocaust

- Hitler co-opted the prevailing eugenic ethos of medicine and used it to develop his national program of “applied biology.”
- Once physicians and nurses accepted Hitler as the “doctor to the German people,” the Hippocratic Oath was refashioned in Hitler’s image. Hitler became the doctor, the German volk became the patient, and Jews, homosexuals, blacks, people with disabilities, and others became the pathogens under the microscope that had to be eliminated.
“Infectious Germs: “With his poison, the Jew destroys/The sluggish blood of weaker peoples;/So that a diagnosis arises,/Of swift degeneration./With us, however, the case is different:/The blood is pure; we are healthy.
Medicine After the Holocaust

• The argument for the destruction of lives not worth living was also an economic one that found favor during difficult economic times.

• 1934: the journal *Deutsche Freiheit* published a small pamphlet by Dr. Heilig, a representative of the Nazi Physicians’ League, in which he argued:

  “It must be made clear to anyone suffering from an incurable disease that the useless dissipation of costly medications drawn from the public store cannot be justified. Parents who have seen the difficult life of a crippled or feeble-minded child must be convinced that, though they may have a moral obligation to care
Medicine After the Holocaust

for the creature, the broader public should not be obligated…to assume the enormous costs that long-term institutionalization might entail.”

Heilig also stated that “it made no sense for persons ‘on the threshold of old age’ to receive services such as orthopedic therapy or dental bridgework; such services were to be reserved for healthier elements of the population.”

Popular medical and racial hygiene journals carried charts depicting the costs of maintaining the sick at the expense of the healthy.
You Are Sharing the Load! A Genetically Ill Individual Costs Approximately 50,000 Reichsmarks by the Age of Sixty.
Summary of medicine during the Third Reich (1933-1945)

• Almost half of all doctors in Germany, more than 38,000 physicians, had joined the Nazi party by war’s end, the largest percentage of any group.
• More than 7% of all physicians were members of the SS, compared with less than 0.5% of the general population.
• German physicians, nurses other medical personnel, public health officials, and biomedical scientists voluntarily made singular contributions without which the following might not have happened:
Summary of medicine during the Third Reich (1933-1945)

- More than 6,000,000 Jews selected and killed.
- 400,000 German patients selected and sterilized.
- 5,000 German children selected and euthanized.
- 200,000 German adults selected and euthanized.
- Only a small percentage of patients in German mental hospitals at the start of World War II survive.
- Cruel, and murderous medical experiments on thousands of concentration camp inmates.
Medicine in Germany during the Third Reich (1933-1945)

- Sterilization Law
- Nuremberg Laws
- Child Euthanasia
- T4 Program
- Operation 14f13
- The Final Solution
- Medical Experiments
- Cover-up
Adult Euthanasia or “T-4”

- The first large-scale test of euthanasia by gassing was conducted at Brandenburg and (chemist) Becker wrote: “At the end of the experiment (Dr.) Victor Brack (head of T-4)…addressed those in attendance. He appeared satisfied by the results of the experiment, and repeated once again that this operation should be carried out only by physicians, according to the motto: ‘The needle belongs in the hands of the doctor.’ (Dr.) Karl Brandt (Hitler’s personal physician) spoke after Brack, and stressed again that gassings should only be done by physicians. That is how things began in Brandenburg.”
Gas Chamber at District Psychiatric Clinic and Care Facility at Bernburg
The Final Solution (contd)

- Duties of SS Doctors in the concentration camps:
  - Ramp “selections.”
  - Camp “selections.”
  - Accompany patients in Red Cross car to crematoria.
  - Choose the appropriate number of pellets of gas.
  - Observe through the hole how the people are dying.
  - When the people were dead, order the opening of the gas chamber.
  - Sign the form confirming that the people are dead and how long it took.
  - Observe the extraction of teeth from the corpses.
Eugenics in the U.S.

- Robert Proctor in *Racial Hygiene: Medicine Under the Nazis*:

  “Racial hygienists drew upon the examples of American immigration, sterilization, and miscegenation laws to formulate their own policies in these areas... Germany’s foremost racial hygiene journal reported on the refusal of the American Medical Association to admit black physicians. German scholars also took note when British and American journals openly considered the question of euthanasia.”
Eugenics in the U.S.

- Arthur Caplan: “It is comforting to believe that health care professionals from the nation that was the world’s leader in medicine at the time, who had pledged an oath to ‘do no harm,’ could not conduct brutal, often lethal, experiments upon innocent persons in concentration camps. It is comforting to think that it is not possible to defend wound research on the living in moral terms. It is comforting to think that anyone who espouses racist, eugenic ideas cannot be a competent, introspective physician or scientist. Nazi medical crimes show that each of these beliefs is false.”
MEDICINE AFTER THE HOLOCAUST

• Michael DeBakey: “I was very lucky my parents could afford to send me to Germany during the Third Reich for a surgical residency. I was looking forward to a career in surgery and research in a medical institution, and the training available in the United States was mostly pretty mediocre. Although there were some spots of good surgery like the Mayo Clinic and the University of Pennsylvania in the 1930s, there was simply nothing in the United States comparable to the prestigious universities in Germany.”
Eugenics in the U.S.

Dr. Sherwin Nuland in his review of USHMM’s *Deadly Medicine* exhibit in the *New Republic* in 2004: “To my startled dismay, I found myself understanding why so much of the German medical establishment acted as it did. I realized that, given the circumstances, I might have done the same ... . What we learn from history comes far less from the study of events than from the recognition of human motivation—and the eternal nature of human frailty.”
Eugenics in the U.S.

- Mark Twain has been quoted as saying, “History does not repeat itself but it does rhyme.
- America’s circumstances today are eerily similar to those of Germany in the early 1930s. There is widespread economic, political, and religious unrest. American biomedical science is the most advanced in the world. The Human Genome Project has revitalized a universal interest in biological determinism and eugenics, just as the rediscovery of Gregor Mendel’s work did. Patient autonomy and patient rights have become orthodox thinking in the highest circles of academic medicine, government, law, and philanthropy throughout America. Economic and political power in medicine is concentrated in a centralized American government.
Three requirements are fundamental to develop a system similar to the program of “applied biology” that led to the most egregious violation of medical ethics ever:

- A ethos of medicine that is not life-centered.
- Centralized economic and political control of medicine.
- A transformation of the Judeo-Christian and Hippocratic covenantal doctor-patient relationship into a contractual doctor-patient relationship on the brink of becoming a state-volk relationship.
LIFE nonmaleficence beneficence JUSTICE

nonmaleficence beneficence

EUGENICS nonmaleficence beneficence JUSTICE

AUTONOMY nonmaleficence beneficence JUSTICE
And I will not give a *drug that is deadly* to anyone if asked (for it), nor will I suggest the way to such counsel.

And likewise I will not give a woman a *destructive* pessary.

And in a pure and holy way I will guard my life and techné.

That I will exercise my profession solely for the cure of my patients, and will give no drug, perform no operation, *for a criminal purpose*, even if solicited, far less suggest it;
Medicine After the Holocaust

- Our ever-increasing health care expenditures are primarily controlled by the federal government:
  - The tax code controls employer sponsored benefits such as $1T in health insurance expenditures.
  - CMS (Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services) controls $1T in Medicare and Medicaid spending.
- The PPACA will shift expenditures from the private sector to the public sector.
- The federal government cannot afford to pay for its promises.
- Rationing is inevitable under the current system.
Medicine After the Holocaust

- “In 1989, Oregon created the Health Services Commission and directed it to develop a “prioritized list of health services ranked in order of importance to the entire population to be covered.” and “Individual condition/treatment pairs are prioritized according to impact on health, effectiveness and (as a tie-breaker) cost.” (comparable to CER or Comparative Effectiveness Research of PPACA)

- “The resulting prioritized list is used by the Legislature to allocate funding for Medicaid and SCHIP, but the Legislature cannot change the priorities set by the independent Commission.” (IPAB or Independent Payment Advisory Board of PPACA)
Medicine After the Holocaust

- In 1997 Oregon enacted the Death with Dignity Act which allows terminally-ill Oregonians to end their lives through the voluntary self-administration of lethal medications, expressly prescribed by a physician for that purpose.
- In July 2008 Barbara Wagner and Randy Strop asked Medicaid to cover their chemotherapy. Each received a letter from the OHP administrator refusing to cover chemotherapy but offering to pay for their assisted suicide or “comfort care.”
- Will the PPACA transform the doctor-patient
Medicine After the Holocaust

• Physicians in Nazi Germany betrayed the Hippocratic Oath, the ethical bedrock of the medical profession for more than 2,000 years, when they chose knowledge over wisdom, the state over the individual, a führer over God, and personal gain over professional ethics. If the best physicians of the early twentieth century could abandon their patients, can we, the best physicians of the twenty-first century, be certain that we will not do the same?