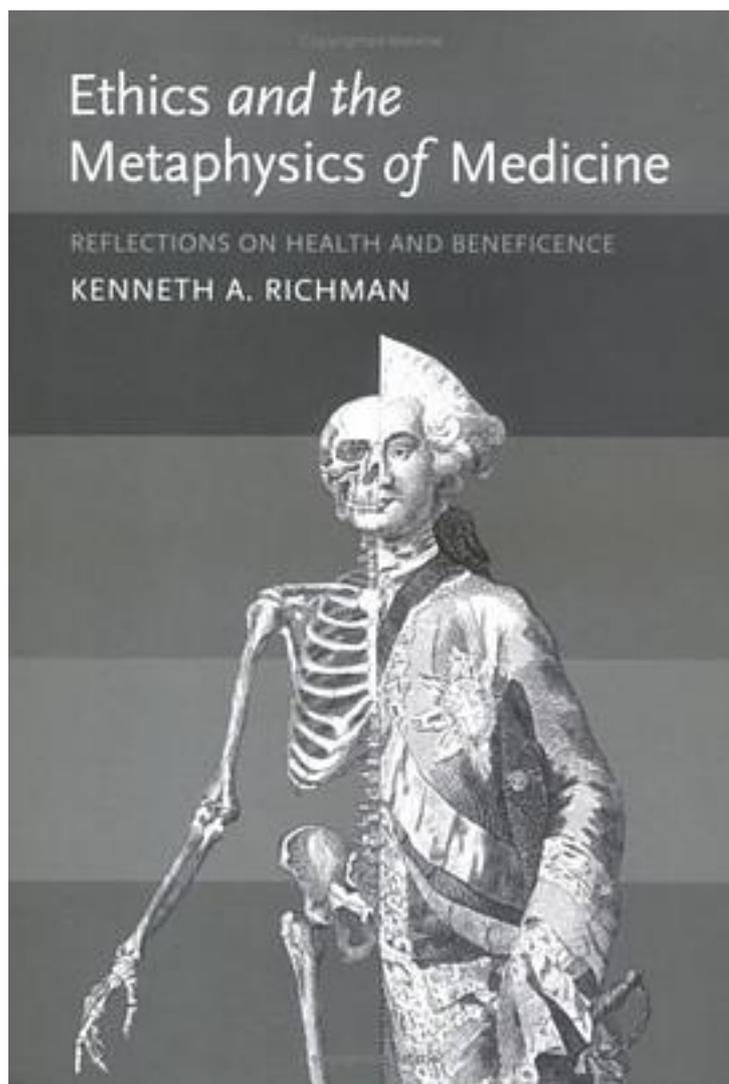


Ethics and the Metaphysics of Medicine



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Definitions of health and disease are of more than theoretical interest. Understanding what it means to be healthy has implications for choices in medical treatment, for ethically sound informed consent, and for accurate assessment of policies or programs. This deeper understanding can help us create more effective public policy for health and medicine. It is notable that such contentious legal initiatives as the Americans with Disability Act and the Patients' Bill of Rights fail to define adequately the medical terms on which their effectiveness depends. In *Ethics and the Metaphysics of Medicine*, Kenneth Richman develops an "embedded instrumentalist" theory of health and applies it to practical problems in health care and medicine, addressing topics that range from the philosophy of science to knee surgery. "Embedded instrumentalist" theories hold that health is a match between one's goals and one's ability to reach those goals, and that the relevant goals may vary from individual to individual. This captures the normative implications of the term health while avoiding problematic relativism. Richman's embedded instrumentalism differs from other theories of health in drawing a distinction between the health of individuals as biological organisms and the health of individuals as moral agents. This distinction illuminates many difficulties in patient-provider communication and helps us understand conflicts between promoting health and promoting ethically permissible behavior. After exploring, expanding, and defending this theory in the first part of the book, Richman examines its ethical implications, discussing such concerns as the connection between medical beneficence and respect for autonomy, patient-provider communication, living wills, and clinical education.

作者介绍:

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