

# CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION IN THE HEALING PROFESSIONS:

## A READER'S GUIDE TO THE ETHICAL AND SOCIAL ISSUES

### Collection Scope and Search Strategies

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This guide to conscientious objection in the healing professions emphasizes resources that are freely available to any reader with Internet access. The topic is currently the subject of public debate and readers without access to research university libraries, will appreciate this bibliography of readily available, free resources. However, readers with access to expensive library subscriptions may wish to refer to the Zotero library for this project--an online, up-to-date listing of literature on the topic at:

[https://www.zotero.org/groups/conscientious\\_objection\\_in\\_the\\_healing\\_professions/items](https://www.zotero.org/groups/conscientious_objection_in_the_healing_professions/items)

To conduct your own searches for reading material about conscientious objection in medicine and the health professions, consider the following factors and approaches:

#### 1) What is "conscientious objection"?

This guide and the resources collected here reflect a defined understanding of conscientious objection. However, there are disputes and arguments about principled, professional and personal objections to providing health care that are not usually described as conscience-based. If you are interested in these topics, you may wish to read the ethics literature about medical futility, the refusal of care and the termination of the physician-patient relationship.

#### 2) Who are the objectors?

This guide focuses on the objections of healthcare professionals. Other objectors, such as parents objecting to vaccinations for their children, may, in fact, have conscience-based arguments, but these may be thought of in the context of patient refusals of care. Thinking about who are the objectors that interest you, will also help to narrow your

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search later. For example, a search for literature on the objections of nurses could exclude much of the literature about the objections of pharmacists.

### **3) What are the recent or specific circumstances that have been driving the debate about conscientious objection in the healing professions?**

This guide was developed while the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services prepared for the adoption of the Affordable Care Act. One of the public debates about this legislation focused on issues of conscience. In short, should religious-based institutions be required to provide health insurance and care for health services that are objectionable to its religious leaders and its community of believers? Currently, the U.S. Supreme Court is deliberating on a related case--*Sebelius v. Hobby Lobby Stores, Inc.* 134 S. Ct. 678 (2013). Thus, in addition to for searching by keywords (e.g. "conscientious objection"), a search for specific cases and relevant events will also result in reading material relevant to debates about conscience-based objections in the healing professions. For short listings of key events related to this topic, see the following sections in this guide: Introduction (<http://hdl.handle.net/1805/3863>), A short overview (<http://hdl.handle.net/1805/3845>) and Court cases and legislation (<http://hdl.handle.net/1805/4511>).

### **4. What are tools and terms to start your search?**

Begin at your local library. Your librarian will know the subscription-only resources available for your use and will have strategies for shaping your search for these specific tools. In addition, here are two suggested tools and basic keyword strategies for beginning your online search:

A) Google Scholar (<http://scholar.google.com>): In addition to searching for articles and book chapters, you can use Google Scholar for legal searching--choose the "Case Law" radio button on the home page.

Sample search:

("conscientious objection" OR "conscience-based" OR "conscience clause" OR "conscience clauses" OR "religious objections" OR "religious exemptions" OR "claims of conscience" OR "freedom of conscience") ("medicine" OR "medical" OR "health care" OR "doctors" OR "physicians" OR "pharmacists" OR "nurses" OR "dentists" OR "health professionals" OR "abortion" OR "contraception" OR "end of life" OR "vaccination")

B) PubMed Medline (<http://pubmed.gov>):

"conscientious objections"[tiab] OR "religious objections"[tiab] OR  
(conscience[mesh] AND (legal[tiab] OR objection[tiab] OR objections[tiab])) OR  
("refusal to treat"[mesh] AND (conscience[all fields] OR religion[all fields])) OR  
("moral obligations"[mesh] AND (conscience[all terms] OR religion[all terms]))  
OR ("moral distress"[tiab] AND (conscience[all terms] OR religion[all terms] OR  
religious[tiab] OR ethical[tiab])) OR ("delivery of health care"[mesh] AND  
"conscience"[all terms])