Children in precarious health present particular problems for healthcare professionals because of their intimate relation to their family, and because of the family’s need to provide major long-term support and to be actively involved in the decisions about their children’s care. This collection of cases and commentaries in pediatrics highlights the difficult ethical dilemmas that can arise during high-tech hospital care of children in precarious circumstances. It serves as a teaching tool for clinical ethics, as an introduction for medical students and residents, and as a review for practicing physicians. Clinical cases are described in detail by the physicians involved, who focus on the ethical issues arising during treatment. Each case is then commented on in detail by a philosopher or other bioethicist. It thus serves as an introduction to contemporary clinical bioethics, but with a firm grounding in the practicalities of real-life pediatric care in the hospital setting.
Ethical Dilemmas in Pediatrics
Cases and Commentaries

Edited by
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Preface

The editors would like to offer their thanks to the authors of the chapters in this book for their thoughtful contributions. Inheritors of a long tradition of silent service, they have been willing to add their voices to an ongoing dialogue between providers of and observers of medical care in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, for which we are grateful.

The children and the families for whom we have had the privilege of caring during their various illnesses are honored as well in these pages, though the details of the cases have been changed by the authors to prevent any identification of particular patients.

Although it is the physician’s voice that is most often heard in this volume, we gratefully acknowledge that the work of the hospital involves many helping professions, including nurses, therapists, chaplains, social workers, and clinical ethicists.

The areas of pediatric medicine and of medical ethics have been impoverished by the loss of William A. Silverman, who died as this volume was in preparation.

The book has been greatly helped by the thoughtful comments of anonymous reviewers and the scrupulous and authoritative editorial work of Hugh Brazier, and is dedicated to our families, who support our work, and to the children.