

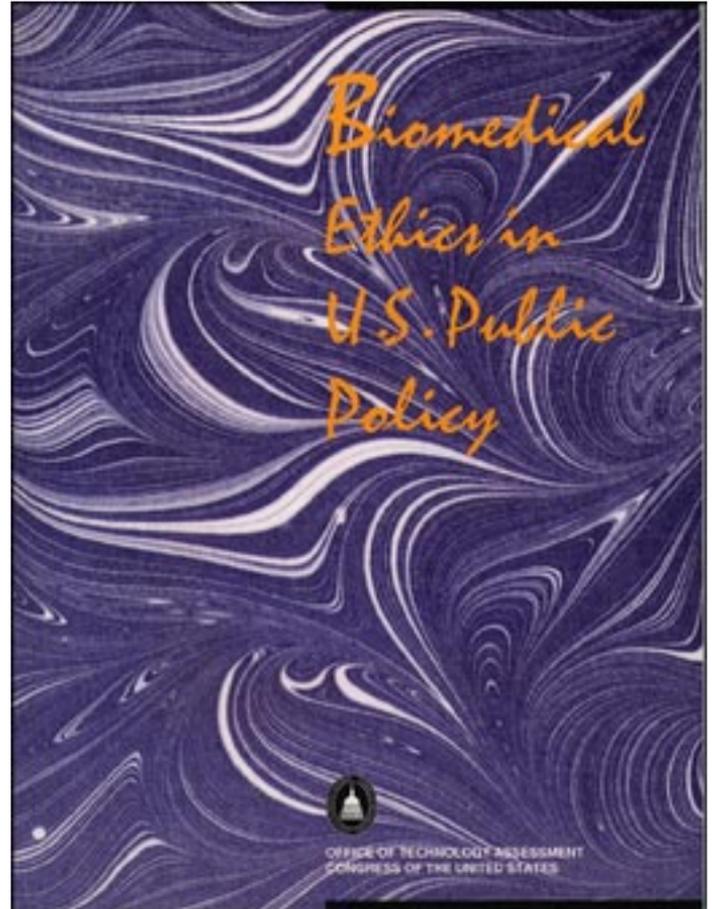
Biomedical Ethics in U.S. Public Policy

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Foreword

Over the past two decades, a desire for mechanisms to articulate common values and foster consensus about biomedical advances in the face of cultural and religious heterogeneity resulted in the creation of Federal bioethics commissions. In hindsight, clearly some of these efforts have had lasting, measurable impacts. For over a decade, though, no such initiative has been functionally operational.

Recently, however, Congress has renewed its interest in a bioethics commission—signaling, in part, the increasing importance of medical and biological technologies in daily life. In September 1992, Senator Mark O. Hatfield, Ranking Minority, Committee on Appropriations; Senator Edward M. Kennedy, Chairman, Committee on Labor and Human Resources; and Senator Dennis DeConcini, Chairman, Subcommittee on Patents, Copyrights, and Trademarks, Committee on the Judiciary, asked the Office of Technology Assessment (OTA) to examine past, broad-based bioethics entities in the context of the question: If Congress decides to create a new Federal bioethics body, what does past experience reveal about which particular factors promote success and which should be avoided?

OTA prepared *Biomedical Ethics in U.S. Public Policy* with the assistance of workshop participants, contractors, and reviewers selected for their expertise and diverse points of view. Additionally, scores of individuals cooperated with OTA staff through interviews or by providing written material. OTA gratefully acknowledges the contribution of each of these individuals. As with all OTA Reports, however, responsibility for the content is OTA's alone,

The Report reviews the history of four Federal bioethics initiatives: the National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, the Ethics Advisory Board, the President's Commission for the Study of Ethical Problems in Medicine and Biomedical and Behavioral Research, and the Biomedical Ethics Advisory Committee. Today, as Congress considers whether to create a new Federal bioethics body, it can be guided by considering the strengths and weaknesses of these efforts. We believe that lessons from the past will prove instructive for the future. As the frontiers of biomedical research and technology continue to advance, it will become increasingly important for policymakers and the public to understand the ethical implications of such innovation.



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