

# Doctor Miracle and bioethics

**1 Read this short extract from a modern version (1964) of the Hippocratic Oath, which is made by all doctors when they start their profession, and discuss it with a partner.**

- a. What do you understand by “matters of life and death”?
- b. What does the expression “I must not play God” mean?

I will respect the privacy of my patients, for their problems are not disclosed to me so that the world may know them. Most especially I must tread with care in matters of life and death. If it is given me to save a life, all thanks. But it may also be within my power to take a life; this awesome responsibility must be faced with great humbleness and awareness of my own frailty. Above all, I must not play God.

(From the version by L. Lasagna, *School of Medicine, Tufts University, still used in medical schools today.*)

**2 Read the following instructions.**

Doctor Miracle is a brilliant gynaecologist. He is also a serious person as regards ethical principles and is faithful to the Hippocratic Oath. Today he has the following patients.

- a. Mary, who is 55, single, and would like to have a baby.
- b. Jane, who is 30 and married, but sterile. She asks the doctor to help her.
- c. Mia and John, who have been trying to have a baby for years and are now interested in artificial insemination.
- d. Amanda, who is 40, afraid of having a disabled baby and wants the appropriate check up.
- e. Carol, who would absolutely love to have a baby girl because she has already a son.
- f. Nancy, who wants a baby with blue eyes and blond hair.
- g. Cynthia, who has a genetic disease and wants to protect the baby she is expecting.



**Now discuss with a partner and decide which patients he will help and how/will not help and why.**

| Patient      | Yes | No | How / Why not |
|--------------|-----|----|---------------|
| Mary         |     |    |               |
| Jane         |     |    |               |
| Mia and John |     |    |               |
| Amanda       |     |    |               |
| Carol        |     |    |               |
| Nancy        |     |    |               |
| Cynthia      |     |    |               |