

Eras Journal - Sharon Harrison

Abstract of "The boundaries of knowing: Female nurses and 'medicalised killing' at the Landesheil- und Pflegeanstalt Eichberg"

The architects of the Nazi euthanasia program were acutely aware of the moral dilemma killing posed for institutional staff and implemented measures to reduce the strain on staff. The organisation of the killing program was a critical factor in the cooperation of nurses in the murder of institutional patients. This article examines how spatial boundaries within killing institutions and the secrecy surrounding the euthanasia program impacted on the behaviour of female nurses.

These issues are examined through a study of female nurses who were involved in the killing of patients at the *Landesheil- und Pflegeanstalt Eichberg*, an institution that served as a 'medicalised killing' institution between 1941 and 1945. This article briefly outlines the history of the Nazi euthanasia program, the organisation of the killing operation at Eichberg and the role played by female nurses at medicalised killing institutions.

The ways in which the organisation of the killing operation impacted upon the conduct of nurses and the strategies employed by nurses to reconcile their participation in medicalised killing are then examined in greater detail. The spatial boundaries within killing institutions and the secrecy surrounding the killings were important elements of the mechanics of the medicalised killing institutions. These spatial boundaries were reinforced by the hierarchical structure of killing institutions and the compartmentalisation of professional roles, which allowed nurses to shift responsibility for the killings.