



Ethics

Forgoing Medical Therapy

Student Objectives

Goal:

To recognize legal and ethical issues in withholding or withdrawing medical therapies.

Outcomes:

At the end of this module, the student will be able to:

1. Describe current statistics regarding the settings in which most deaths occur in America, the percent of deaths preceded by an active decision to stop or not start a life-sustaining therapy, and the role of surrogates in making healthcare decisions for seriously ill and dying loved ones.
2. Describe the legal, ethical and emotional issues surrounding withholding versus withdrawing medical therapies.
3. Describe the legal, ethical and emotional issues surrounding artificially provided nutrition and hydration versus other types of life-sustaining therapies such as mechanical ventilation.
4. List and determine three reasons for not reducing opioid administration to dying patients in response to deteriorating clinical signs.
5. Determine two reasons why clinicians may be reluctant to provide adequate pain management to dying patients.
6. Define each of the following terms: terminal sedation; voluntary stopping of eating and drinking; assisted suicide; voluntary active euthanasia.
7. Determine which of the following actions currently are legal and not legal options: terminal sedation; voluntary stopping of eating and drinking; assisted suicide; voluntary active euthanasia.
8. Describe five steps for respectfully responding to patient or family requests to hasten death.