

A current and forever ongoing ethical issue in nursing is navigating end-of-life care with patients' families. When a physician has decided there is no longer care we can provide to recover patients, difficult decisions often must be made. If a patient has a living will that explains their choice of advance directives this must be followed foremost. If a will was not established by the patient, decisions are passed on to the POA and then to the family. There are many times that family members want to continue to provide the most invasive treatments possible to hopefully bring back their loved one. Families are left to decide about treatments such as CPR, mechanical ventilation, artificial nutrition, and hydration and when to stop treatments. This causes an ethical dilemma among the family members who do not agree with each other, the physicians who do not want to continue any treatments, and the nurses trying to navigate the situation. Medical actions provided to a patient that will provide no progression are defined as "medical futility". "Therefore, physicians should certainly consider the ethical value of the autonomy of their patients or his or her patients' proxies, but they should also discuss possible damage from treatments, and how the use of unnecessary resources leads to an increase in healthcare costs" (Akdeniz et al. 2021) Physicians may overlook patients and families requests because of their views of the patient's status. Our job as nurses is to advocate for our patients and ensure their needs are understood and achieved.

This may cause an ethical dilemma for us as nurses as we continue to communicate with the patient and the family. Even if we disagree with the family's viewpoint of end-of-life decisions we must be respectful and professional. As stated in the ANA Code of Ethics for Nurses in Code number 2, a nurse's commitment is to the patient, which includes their family. We must provide autonomy to the patient but make sure to educate them when furthering treatment is not in their best interest. Open communication between physicians, nurses, patients, and families is the best way to prevent an ethical dilemma related to end-of-life decisions. Even if we can not fully understand the decisions of patients or their families, we must have compassion for what they are going through. Nurses must uphold patients' worth during the most difficult times. I believe this is an ethical issue that we will all run into as nurses, so it is very important to examine and understand your own feelings about end-of-life care.

Works Cited

Akdeniz, M., Yardimci, B., & Kavukcu, E. (2021, February 12). *Ethical considerations at the end-of-life care*. SAGE open medicine. Retrieved March 2, 2023, from <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/33786182/>