

## End-of-Life Medical Practices Reflection

Honestly, I am happy to have read chapter 19 in our textbook and to have watch these two required films (Berk, 2018; ONE Interpreting, 2015; Playground Stories, 2016). I believe that knowledge of death, especially the process of dying, is essential to being comfortable with this difficult topic. It is important for people to think about and discuss the end of their lives before they (and their families) are caught in a crisis situation. These conversations can (and should) include family members, doctors, priests, ministers, lawyers, rabbis, close friends, etc. People need to get all of their questions answered. It is not a comfortable topic to talk about, but it is necessary to discuss in order to avoid further problems and stresses.

Incurably and terminally ill individuals should have a right to die if that is what they want. Who am I to make that decision for someone else? Please do not misunderstand me, we have to be sure that the person is terminal and wants to die for the appropriate reasons: pain, lack of quality of life, personal dignity, etc. This, however, is an individual choice, and each person should have the right to make that decision for themselves. How it is done will depend on the specific situation: ending life sustaining treatment, medical aid-in-dying, voluntary euthanasia. I understand that there are challenges in monitoring and regulating each of these processes. As long as we know what the patient desires, I think we should uphold their wishes. The hardest part is that some patients end up incapacitated before they have explained to their family members what they want to happen. That is why communication (prior to a crisis) is important.

Once a person has considered their options and made their decisions, it is important to have these decisions formally written down in legal documents (living will and health care power of attorney). I think people forget that these documents actually make life easier for the family left behind, because they explain the medical care and the end of life that the terminally ill person desires. Loved ones do not have to question whether they are doing the right thing, because the legal documents tell them exactly what the incapacitated person wants to happen. To me, these documents are so important, not just to the incompetent patient, but also to the remaining family. I cannot imagine the anguish of trying to make these decisions for a loved one when I am not fully aware of what they want.

My discussion so far has not addressed terminally ill or incapacitated children. Children are not allowed to make these decisions and sign legal documents. Therefore, I believe that the decision for children should be left up to the parents after we have confirmed that the parents are acting in the best interest of the child. This process will not be easy, but I do not think we should let children suffer because we do not want to take the time and responsibility of confirming the parents' intentions.

These are extremely difficult questions and issues, but each individual and their family should be allowed to make their choices without interference from others. If someone wants to live, by all means, they should live. I just think it should be up to the individual.

## References

Berk, L. E. (2018) *Development Through the Lifespan (7th ed)*. New York, NY: Pearson.

ONE Interpreting. (2015, June 11). *Assisted suicide on TV for first time.*

YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PVRKodBBINYL>Links to an external site.

PlayGround Stories. (2016, September 18). *Euthanasia for sick children in Belgium.*

Youtube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NvKAopaxGx0>