



Life Affirming Perspectives on End of Life Issues

I. Overview/General Principles

II. Advanced Directives

Advance Directive definition: A written statement regarding medical treatment which is made to ensure that those wishes are carried out should the person be unable to speak for himself/herself.

Three Types of Advance Directives

- 1) Living Will

- 2) Durable Power of Attorney for Healthcare/Protective Medical Decisions Document (PMDD)

- 3) MOLST/POLST

III. Specific Issues

A. Hospice and Palliative Care

Palliative Care definition: Specialized medical care that focuses on providing relief from pain and management of symptoms of serious illness, no matter the diagnosis or state of the disease. The aim is to holistically improve the quality of life for both patients and their families. It is an interdisciplinary approach encompassing the physical, social, psychological, and spiritual quality of life.

Distinctions between non-profit and for profit hospice and concerns.

B. Nutrition/Hydration

- Most common area of conflict and tension in medical decision making

Principles for Consideration

"A clear presumption in favor of life should be established. People who are able to eat, but only with assistance, cannot be discriminated against or be refused appropriate treatment."

Shannon, Thomas A., ed., *Bioethics*, 4th Edition (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1993), 178.

Discussion of

- Excessively burdensome treatment

- Principle—Omission of therapy/treatment should not have the intent of ending the person's life.

C. Persistent Vegetative State (PVF)

Pope John Paul II (2004)

"No living human being ever descends to the status of a 'vegetable' or animal. Even our brothers and sisters who find themselves in the clinical condition of a 'vegetative state' retain their human dignity in all its fullness. The loving gaze of God continues to be upon them...especially in need of help. Against a 'quality of life' ethic that makes discriminatory judgments about the worthiness of different people's lives, the Church insists that the value of a man's life cannot be made subordinate to any judgment of its quality expressed by other men."

D. Organ Donation

IV. Q & A/Conclusion

Online Resources

Anglicans for Life: anglicansforlife.org

Maryland Conference of Catholic Bishops: mdcathcon.org/publications
(see esp. "Comfort and Consolation: Care of the Sick and Dying")

Patient's Rights Council: patientsrightscouncil.org

United States Conference of Catholic Bishops: usccb.org
(see esp. "Human Life and Dignity/End of Life" and *Issues and Action* tab)