

Free essay about withholding or withdrawal of medical treatment

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Every person has a right to be treated and cared in the medical institutions and it also should be mentioned that he/she is the one who should decide what kind of treatment he/she wants to receive if there is any choice.

Speaking about life-sustaining care we should remember that it is the area where it is not that easy to make decisions because usually you have to decide whether to stay in the hospital under some masks and tubes till the end of your life or die immediately. But what if there is no person except for the doctor or nurse who is obliged to decide?

Sometimes it happens that the medical staff has to decide what should be done with every particular patient and this is the case of Ms. Robaczynski who disconnected a respirator of the man who was on the verge of death. It was 48-year old Mr. Gessner who was taken to the hospital with cirrhosis of the liver, pneumonia and bladder cancer. This comatose man had no chances to recover and he was really dying. Ms. Robaczynski is a nurse who actually decided something in his case because she concluded that it would be better for the patient to die now but not in a few hours. In such a way it has to be said that as she was the one to take some actions she was also the one to be blamed for them. So she had to explain her decisions in the trial. As far as this point is concerned it is worth mentioning that there were at least two different groups of people who understood Ms. Robaczynski's actions in two almost opposite ways: some of them thought that she was totally guilty and there is no excuse for her, others were not so categorical in their judgments and thought that all the conditions should be taken into account. So as far as we can understand that is really difficult to state something in such a situation for sure.

First of all, we should understand the difference between withholding and withdrawal of the treatment. If the doctor decides to withhold some treatment that means that he is not certain whether it will help or not in this or that particular case. He should be a hundred percent sure that the action he is going to take regarding some case will help the patient. What concerns the withdrawal of the treatment that has been already started we should remember that it is more burdensome because once the doctors made a decision to start some way of treatment and now they see that it is not beneficial for the patient. The decision to withdraw some treatment is usually taken according to the wishes of the patient or his family. The role of the health care team should be to inform about possible outcomes in this case (“AMA's Code”, n. d.)

In such a way from the above mentioned statements we can understand that Ms. Robaczynski was not a person to decide for the patient. Her role could be just to inform Mr. Gessner's family that he was not breathing and that he would die in a few hours. To my mind she took some action in this case and this action led to death. So, I think Ms. Robaczynski is a killer as she actually committed this crime. May be it was not done because of the purpose to kill the patient, she wanted to help him in this way but she was not a person who could take such decisions. According to the “Principles of Medical Ethics” the doctor should take care of his patient, he should be devoted to his job and provide the correct medical care, he should respect all the rights of his patients, their relatives, etc (“End-of-life care”, n. d.).

Furthermore, we should remember that actually Ms. Robaczynski became the cause of the patient's death. Of course, he was really sick and was going

to die shortly but it was not his sickness that killed him, it was the nurse who took an action, removed the respirator and let the patient die. In such a way we can see that despite the fact that according to the nurse's mind all this was made in order to help this man, she actually became a cause of patient's death, she became a killer.

However, it should be mentioned that Ms. Robaczynski's actions could have been viewed a little bit differently if Mr. Gessner had asked to be disconnected from this life-sustaining system. Every person has an exceptional right to decide in such situations when there is no hope for successful recovery and actually doctors cannot help to make your condition better in any way. I think that if the person asks to be disconnected from respirator and the health care team knows that the patient will die in the shortest time then doctors should take the last will of their patient into consideration. There is no doubt that the doctor or nurse will feel some guilt but it is fairer than to let the person suffer a few more hours. It should be also taken into account that according to the doctor's ethics he should remember that he has to show respect and compassion towards the dying and the patient should be informed about the possible options in his particular situation. The health care team has to relieve the patient's pain and sufferings according to his/her interests (" End-of-life care", n. d.). In such a way we can understand that if the patient asks to make him die earlier then the medical staff has to take this into account. Of course, it would also be understood as an active killing because some person takes some action to make the other one die but in this case it would be actually the patient to blame because it is the implementation of his own will.

References

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