




Decision-making at the end-of-life: When have we done enough?

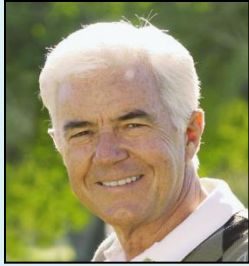
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- ▶ Challenges of medical decision-making
 - ▶ Decision-making with our patients
 - ▶ Decision-making for ourselves
 - ▶ Challenges for the future

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➤ Advance Care Planning

Advance Care Planning is considering.....



Who will consent to medical
decisions if I am
too ill to do this for myself
&
how will they know
what I want?



Challenges of decision-making at end-of-life

- Advances in medicine – benefits and burdens
- Fragmentation of medical care
- Time-critical treatment protocols
- Don't talk about death
- Uncertainty at time of decision-making
- Different ethical prisms – patient and clinician



Two types of medical diagnostic error

- Clinicians vary in their communication skills
...and their understanding of law and ethics
 - Illness misdiagnosis
 - Preference misdiagnosis

(Mulley A et al. 2012. BMJ)



Need to speak with our patients - shared decision-making

- ▶ About what is important to them
 - Their values and beliefs – what gives their life meaning
 - Their experience of illness and the impact on their life
 - What they fear most or what is the worst thing
 - What is important to them now
 - How they make decisions – alone / with others
 - Discuss treatment options in that patient's context
- Aiming for a **shared** understanding of what is best



Challenges of decision-making at end-of-life

- ▶ High expectations of what medicine can achieve

Dying

- ▶ Final event – heart stops beating
& breathing ceases
 - ?? Cardiac arrest with treatment of CPR



■ If treatment may be effective

➤ Need dialogue to achieve shared decision

■ If treatment cannot be effective for prolonging life or for improving comfort

OR

If treatment would merely prolong dying

➤ Need a discussion to explain why the treatment won't be offered/provided




How should Christians decide?

- ▶ Our patients may not always share our views
 - May choose differently

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How should Christians decide?

- This life is not the ultimate goal
& death is not defeat
- But this life is valuable –
 - Love and serve God



“For me to live is Christ and to die is gain. If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labour for me.

Yet what shall I choose? I do not know!

I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body”.

Philippians 1:21-24



“So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do,
do it all for the glory of God.”

1 Corinthians 10:31



Some thoughts for discussion

- For Christians death of this life is the beginning of eternal life
- Value of good health is what else it permits us to do
- How should we best allocate health dollars?
- When does pursuit of health become a barrier ?

