

# Ethical decision making in disaster situations

Bioengineering 100

Fall 2016

You are visiting a friend at Alta  
Bates Hospital when a large  
earthquake hits the SF/Bay Area.  
You are uninjured but the building  
is not safe. Who do you  
evacuate first?

# 2005: Hurricane Katrina



# Memorial Hospital



An aerial shot of New Orleans' Memorial Medical Center after Hurricane Katrina shows the hospital inundated with water. (The Times-Picayune archives)  
[http://www.nola.com/movies/index.ssf/2013/10/book\\_on\\_memorial\\_medical\\_cente.html](http://www.nola.com/movies/index.ssf/2013/10/book_on_memorial_medical_cente.html)

Who do you evacuate first?



# Ambulatory patients were gathered in the lower floors to await airboats.



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# Nurse fans patients near the heliport before helicopter evacuation



Euthanasia:  
Is it reasonable in this case?



# Talking about Death

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Imagine that you have not been feeling well for months  
and go to the doctor for a checkup.  
After a series of tests, your doctor gives you devastating  
news - you have a terminal illness.  
Furthermore, your doctor tells you that most people with  
this condition live no longer than a year.

What is your first thought,  
emotion, reaction?

# Karen Ann Quinlan

- 1975 (age 21) Quinlan ingested alcohol and tranquilizers.
- Entered a persistent vegetative state.
- Father requested removal of ventilator.



# Karen Ann Quinlan

- Physician and hospital refused to remove ventilator
- Father lost in court initially but won on appeal (to get legal guardianship to make the decision on her behalf)



# Karen Ann Quinlan

- 1976 ventilator was removed
- 1986 Quinlan died from pneumonia



# Elizabeth Bouvia

- Cerebral palsy & degenerative arthritis
- 1983 (age 26)  
Admitted herself to the hospital,  
requested they allow her to starve  
to death





# Elizabeth Bouvia

- Hospital refused, force fed with feeding tube.
- Lawsuit by ACLU upheld hospitals' decision



# Elizabeth Bouvia

- Bouvia fought the force feeding by biting through the tube.
- Four people were needed to hold her down to insert the tube
- Is this battery and torture?





# Elizabeth Bouvia

- Bouvia appealed twice and finally won the second time in 1986.
- After this, she decided to live and became a figure for the 'right to die' movement



# Nancy Cruzan

- 1983 (age 26) Cruzan lost control of her car and was thrown from the vehicle.
- Determined to be in PVS
- 1988 parents asked for removal of feeding tube



# Nancy Cruzan

- Hospital refused without court order
- Court ruled in favor of the parents, as Cruzan had told a friend previously "she would not wish to continue her life unless she could live at least halfway normally."





# Nancy Cruzan

- State of Missouri appealed and won, eventually went to the Supreme Court
- SC upheld Missouri: “clear and convincing evidence” required to refuse treatment





# Nancy Cruzan



# Nancy Cruzan

- 1990: Cruzan's parents gathered more evidence, and received a court order to remove the feeding tube.
- Right to life activists protested; 19 people were arrested when they entered Cruzan's hospital room to try to reconnect the feeding tube



# Personal Reflection

# Discussion Questions

- Which question was the most difficult for you to answer and why?
- Did any of the questions make you feel uncomfortable?
- Had you ever thought about these issues before?
- Be sure to discuss question #5: What about the process of dying concerns you most?
  - Is your concern based on someone else's experience?
  - Have you shared your concern with anyone?
  - Did it make any difference talking about it

# Advance Directives

You have the right to give instructions about your own health care.

You have the right to name someone else to make healthcare decisions for you.

# Advance Medical Directive

- Designate someone to make health care decisions for you
- State what authority your designated agent has (all, some, etc...)
- Instructions for your health care in end of life decisions
- Donation of organs (optional)
- Primary physician (optional)



Difficult decisions for those we  
love

Your 78-year-old mother, a widow, has been in a nursing home for five years. She has severe heart disease and now must depend on the help of nurses' aides to do all her daily care. Her mental ability has greatly declined; she is often confused and doesn't remember much from day to day. She is not in pain but tires easily and spends much of her day napping in a chair. When she is awake, she appears quite content listening to music and watching the activities around her. Though she can't remember who most people are, she knows you and seems to enjoy your visits.

Your mother is no longer able to swallow, and her doctor says that in order to get nourishment, she would need surgery to place a feeding tube in her stomach. With a feeding tube, she could live another 6-12 months (the doctor can't say for sure) while continuing to decline. Without it, she probably will live several weeks without additional suffering.

Though your mother has an advance directive naming you as her decision-maker, she had not written down or talked about how she wanted to live her last phase of life. Since she can no longer make her own decisions, the doctor asks you what she would want regarding the feeding tube.

# What is of importance to you?

- Having her live as long as possible
- Letting nature take its course
- Her quality of life
- The impact on family members
- Keeping her as comfortable as possible
- The sanctity of life
- Other

# Discussion Questions

- What was most important in helping you make a decision? Why?
- What was least important and why?
- What did you decide you would do?
- If you were the 78-year-old in this scenario: What would you want done and why?
- Would your closest relative/friend know what to do?
- What would you tell your closest relative/friend now so he/she knows what to do in the future?