

## Notes on “Confronting death: Who chooses, who controls? A dialogue between Dax Cowart and Robert Burt”

A central point that Burt makes on p. 348 is that *respecting a patient's autonomy* can be interpreted in two different ways. He describes the first way at the bottom of column 1 on p. 348 and the top column 2. As Burt says immediately after describing it, he disagrees with this interpretation. He then describes the second way of interpreting it in column 2 on p. 348. This is how Burt believes that a doctor should act in order to respect a patient's autonomy.

And even though he is a strong advocate for patient autonomy (as he expresses on p. 350 and in col. 1 on p. 351), Dax agrees that doctors should interpret *respect for the patient's autonomy* in the second way. I'll let you find where he says it, but Dax is expressing his support for the second interpretation when he says,

I do **not** urge, when a physician goes to a patient's bedside and the patient says, “Doc, I don't want to be treated, leave me alone,” that the physician say, “it's your decision” and walk away.

This is just one issue that is discussed in their dialogue, but it's an important one and they keep coming back to it. So, make sure that you keep in mind that (1) autonomy doesn't just have to mean letting the patient immediately do whatever he or she wants, at least according to them and (2) they agree about this.