

End-of-Life Decision Making

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1. Introduction

- End-of-life decision making involves choices about care for patients near death.
- It balances prolonging life with comfort, dignity, and patient wishes.

2. Key Concepts

- **Palliative care:** care focused on relieving suffering rather than cure.
- **Withholding treatment:** not starting an intervention judged non-beneficial.
- **Withdrawing treatment:** stopping a treatment that is no longer helpful.

3. Role of Patient Wishes

- Advance directives and living wills guide decisions when capacity is lost.
- A health proxy may decide using substituted judgment or best interests.

4. Ethical and Legal Issues

- Distinguishing allowing natural death from active euthanasia.
- Ensuring decisions respect autonomy without abandoning the patient.

5. Communication

- Honest discussion of prognosis helps families and patients prepare.
- Shared decision making involves the care team, patient, and family.

6. Summary

- End-of-life decisions prioritise dignity, comfort, and patient values.
- Clear communication and advance planning ease difficult choices.