

Beijing-San Francisco Study of Medical Practices

1. Date of Birth _____

2. Sex _____ Male

_____ Female

3. Specialty _____

I would now like to describe a few medical cases to you. Please tell me what you think would be the best approach to each case.

1. A 70 year old woman goes to her doctor complaining of pain on the right side of her chest. After testing, she is found to have breast cancer that has spread to her liver, lungs and bone, and now returns for a follow-up appointment.

When she asks the cause of her pains, **should the doctor tell the patient that she has cancer?**

- a. Yes. Why?
- b. No. Why not?
- c. It depends on what the patient's family wants. (explain)
- d. Other (explain)

2. Before the doctor sees the patient, the patient's husband finds the doctor and asks about her condition. After a long discussion, the doctor tells him that she has cancer. The husband feels that it would be best for the patient if she did not know that she had cancer, and he asks the doctor not to tell his wife that she has cancer. **Should the doctor tell the patient that she has cancer?**

- a. No. Why not?
- b. Yes. Why?
- c. Other. Please explain

3. The patient is informed of her diagnosis and is treated with chemotherapy that causes nausea, vomiting and fatigue despite numerous measures to reduce these side-effects. Halfway through her scheduled treatment, she has a full examination that shows the metastases appear to have shrunk substantially.

After long discussion between the doctor, patient, and her family, the patient says she would like to stop the treatments because they make her feel so sick. Her husband and two children disagree, and tell the doctor that they would like the treatments to continue.

What should the doctor do?

- a. Stop the chemotherapy. Why?
- b. Continue the chemotherapy. Why?
- c. Other. (Please explain)

4. The patient elects to undergo treatment, but a few months later she develops severe abdominal and bone pain as well as shortness of breath at rest despite high doses of narcotics and other pain medication and adequate oxygen. She is alert, she is not depressed, and her thinking is clear.

A. On several occasions, the patient asks the doctor to help end her life to stop her suffering. In separate conversations with the doctor, her husband and two children agree and ask the doctor to give her medication to end her life.

In this case, should the doctor help the patient obtain enough narcotics to end her life?

- a. No. Why not?
- b. Yes. Why?
- c. Other. (Explain)

B. On several occasions, the patient asks the doctor to help end her life to stop her suffering. However, her husband and two children ask the doctor not to give her medication to end her life.

In this case, should the doctor help the patient obtain enough narcotics to end her life?

- a. No. Why not?
- b. Yes. Why?
- c. Other. (Explain)

5. A 75 year old man has suffered a severe stroke. His left arm and leg are completely paralyzed, he is unable to walk and is incontinent. His speech is slurred, but he understands and is able to answer questions. He is not clinically depressed. After four weeks of treatment, his condition has not improved. He is unable to eat because he cannot swallow, and has lost 6 kilograms, about 10% of his normal body weight. He is receiving intravenous fluids. The doctor is considering placing a tube to give the patient liquid feedings.

Which of the following do you think is the best way for the doctor to decide about a feeding tube?

- a. The decision to put in a feeding tube in this patient should depend mainly on what the doctor believes to be the best medical treatment.

- b. The decision to put in a feeding tube in this patient should depend mainly on what the patient wants.
- c. The decision to put in a feeding tube in his patient should depend mainly on what the patient's family wants.

Explain choice (a-c)

6. An 80 year old man, a well known scholar, was hospitalized with a persistent vegetative state after recurrent cerebral hemorrhages. He has had an unchanged neurologic status for many months and is sustained entirely with tube feeding.

A. The patient's wife and other close family members want the doctor to continue all treatment, although they realize that the patient's chance of meaningful recovery is slim. **Should the doctor continue the life-sustaining treatment?**

- a. No. Why not?
- b. Yes. Why?
- c. Other. (explain)

B. The patient's wife and other family members, after discussion with their physician, realize that the patient will likely never regain normal consciousness. They ask the doctor to withdraw all treatment. **Should the doctor continue the life -sustaining treatment?**

- a. No. Why not?
- b. Yes. Why?
- c. Other. (explain)

7. A married business man visits his doctor for treatment of his high blood pressure. He also reports a history of syphilis last year for which he was treated (his wife later had a negative test for syphilis). He says he thinks he got syphilis from prostitutes during a trip to Thailand. He is feeling well. The patient doesn't mention HIV or AIDS, but the doctor knows that this man has a high risk of having HIV infection.

A. **Which one of the following statements do you agree with most closely?**

- a. The doctor should insist that the man have an HIV test.
- b. The doctor should recommend that the man have an HIV test, but the decision should be up to the patient.
- c. The doctor should discuss HIV testing with the man, but should make no recommendation about whether to have the test.
- d. The doctor should not mention HIV testing to the patient.
- e. Other (Explain)

B. The patient has a test for HIV done in the hospital and it is positive. **Should the doctor tell the patient that he is HIV positive?**

- a. No. Why not?
- b. Yes. Why?
- c. Other. Please explain

C. He does not want his wife to know his HIV test results. **Should the doctor insist that the man tell his wife?**

- a. No. Why not?
- b. Yes. Why?
- c. Other. Please explain

D. Several years later, the patient develops end-stage AIDS and is not expected to live more than six months. **Should the doctor tell the patient that he has AIDS?**

- a. Yes. Why?
- b. No. Why not?
- c. Other. Please explain

E. The patient says that he does not want the doctor to report his positive AIDS test to the Public Health Department. **Should the doctor report it?**

- a. Yes. Why?
- b. No. Why not?
- c. Other. Please explain

F. The patient says he wants to die with dignity and asks the doctor to stop all treatment. **Should his treatment be stopped as he wishes?**

- a. Yes. Why?
- b. No. Why not?
- c. Other. (please explain)

Thank you for your participation. **Do you have any final comments?**

Note: From “Feldman MD, Zhang J, Cummings SR. Chinese and U.S. Internists adhere to different ethical standards. J Gen Intern Med 1999;14:469-73.” Printed by permission from Mitchell Feldman, Department of Medicine, University of California San Francisco School of Medicine.