Interactive Ethics Case for February-March 2001

Dear Faculty and Students:
The February-March ethics dilemma is based on situations depicted in the Pulitzer Prize-winning play called *Wit*, written by Margaret Edison. *Wit* is the story of Dr. Vivian Bearing and her struggle with ovarian cancer. Gritty, funny and unsentimental, the play explores Bearing's journey towards a greater understanding of what it means to live with compassion and die with dignity. This play will be presented from April 11 - May 6 at the Dallas Theater Center. In conjunction with the play, Dallas Theater Center will offer Project Discovery educational programs especially designed for high school groups as well as discounted and free tickets to some performances. For information about these activities, faculty should contact Jennifer King, Director of Education & Community Programs at Dallas Theater Center (214-252-3917 or Jennifer.King@DallasTheaterCenter.org).

Because *Wit* contains nudity, parental and faculty discretion is advised.

You are an oncologist (a physician who treats patients with cancer). One of your patients, a 40-year-old woman with a common but usually fatal form of cancer, has agreed to be the first subject in your new experimental treatment program. If your new treatment method causes her type of tumor to regress (get smaller), then you may be able to save many lives. Your patient has advanced cancer at the time treatment begins. Almost immediately the tumor begins to regress. Your patient's overall health deteriorates, however, and you decide to admit her to the hospital. Shortly after arriving at the hospital, she suffers cardiac arrest (her heart stops). The hospital staff saves her life, but she is unconscious and requires machine life-support. When she entered the hospital, she prepared a "living will," which states that she wants all machines turned off after ten days should she become unconscious and requires life-support. Her tumor continues to regress in response to the experimental treatment even though her overall condition does not improve. Ten days pass. Should you turn off the life supporting machines and allow her to die, or should you continue life support long enough to learn if the experimental therapy can completely destroy her tumor? What are the ethical issues involved?

Dear Students,
Thank you for your responses to the ethics discussion case for February/March, 2001. We received 258 responses representing 20 schools. As always, your answers were very thoughtful, and you covered all of the important points about the situation.

About two thirds of you (166 responses) would remove the patient from life support. Another large group felt that given the potential importance of the research, either the patient should be continued on life support (24 responses) or the family should be consulted about the possibility of overriding the living will so as to continue the research (17 responses). Finally, there was a group of students (51) who did not take a firm stand in either direction, but discussed the balance between the patient having agreed to take part in the experiment on one hand and having implemented a living will on the other that would in effect end her participation in the experiment.

Keep reading and you will find faculty comments regarding this case.
**Professional Response #1**

Any research subject should be able to quit the research program any time. This patient is not competent to tell us whether she wants to quit the research, but she has a living will. Because the living will was executed when she was admitted to the hospital (i.e., after enrolling in the research), there really is no room for doubt that she would want to "leave" the research program under these circumstances by having her life-sustaining treatment withdrawn.

There is something to be said for the proposition that refusing to honor her advance directive would be arguably appropriate. Some have written that there's no particular reason to honor advance directives in the first place. When, as here, there are good reasons not to (e.g., the advancement of scientific knowledge), and those reasons are consistent with the patient's decision to enroll in the first place, you could argue, on the basis of benefits and burdens, that continuing life support is actually in her best interests.

But I don't agree with the position that you should be able to ignore advance directives with impunity. It is totally inappropriate to maintain an unconscious patient on life-support, against her express and contemporaneous wishes, for an unspecified period of time (the only end-point mentioned is when we know that the treatment did or did not wipe out the tumor: how long will that take?) in order to gather research data. This flies in the face of Kant's categorical imperative by treating the patient solely as a means to another's ends. Without her consent to such a scenario, it shouldn't be allowed.

**Professional Response #2**

There are a number of international guidelines that have established ethical principles of human research. One of the most important is the Declaration of Helsinki, which you can read at: http://www.faseb.org/arvo/helsinki.htm. Principle A.5 of the Declaration states that

*In medical research on human subjects, considerations related to the well-being of the human subject should take precedence over the interests of science and society.*

This principle is central to our ethics dilemma. No matter how important the information that could be derived from the research, the well-being of the patient must always takes precedence. Now research, by its very nature, is for the benefit of science and society and future patients. That is why informed consent by a patient is necessary and critical for her to become a research subject. Informed consent means that she agrees to be a research subject even though she realizes that the research might not benefit her condition and could even cause her harms not all of which can be anticipated in advance. (That is also part of "research." You do not know precisely what will happen.) Informed consent is always tentative. That is, at any time, for any reason, the person can withdraw her permission to be a subject.

Our patient agreed to be a subject, which made it permissible for the oncologist to try the new therapy. If the patient had remained conscious, then the experimental therapy could have been continued as long as she did not revoke her consent. Once she became unconscious, her condition could only be guided by her living will, which meant ending life support and consequently ending her participation in the experiment as well. Continuing the experiment would have meant putting the interests of science and society above those of the individual.
Student Comments:
3/22/01

This is a very complex ethics issue. However, I believe that the life support should be turned off. Human life is something that is highly valuable and if anyone deserves the right to choose life or death, it is that individual, not a doctor. The doctor is serving the patient, not the other way around, so the doctor should serve the patient by respecting the final wishes the patient has entrusted the doctor with. She made the living will after she began the treatment so this shows what her priority is. Her priority is to die on her own terms rather than serve the medical community. The treatment for cancer obviously was showing signs of promise so it would be feasible for the doctor to take another patient into the experimental treatment. The doctor should also try to determine the cause of the woman's cardiac arrest to find out if the treatment was possibly at fault. The implications of the research do not null a person's rights to free will. Her rights must be respected and she should be taken off of the life support as soon as the ten day period is up.

G. R.
Garland High School

3/21/01

This woman has obviously made a very tough choice, but she made it in good conscience. I would think that before she entered a new experimental treatment, that she might have been required to sign a contract. And I believe that the first thing to do would be to explore if her 'living will' over rides her agreement with the experimental drug company. If the living will does in fact take precedence over any previous contract then it only logical to honor her wishes. I believe that her 'living will' should be honored, but also for the doctors to find out as much as they can from this woman and the treatment she has undergone. If it was the drug that caused her final complication and not her cancer, then this drug should not be tested further. If it is concluded that the new drug is not to blame for her death, then unfortunately there will be many other patients that would volunteer for a new treatment. I think that we should always consider someone's personal wishes, before the success of a treatment or a drug. This woman was a person just like you and I and I know that I would want my doctor to honor my wishes. This woman is the first test subject of this new drug. There will be many more like her. And she is a person not just a test subject.

R. G.
MacArthur H.S.

3/20/01

I think that the doctors should have used that 10 day period to find out what caused this woman's cardiac arrest, because if it was the experimental drug that caused this condition then it should not be experimented with on other patients and if it is not the cause then it can be used on other people. Doctors would not want to put more innocent lives at risk by experimenting with a drug that might have killed a person. Plus, I think if the doctors could not find the cause of this cardiac arrest then the patient's family should be consulted, because I believe that if the woman was willing to put her life at risk to help find a potential cure for cancer then she would be willing to be on the machines for at least a few more days so that they can see if the medicine was the cause of her worsened condition or if the medicine was a cure. Also, I as a future medical person think that if the medicine was not the cause of this woman's condition, then the woman
should be kept alive for the period of time it would take to see if the medicine would completely get rid of the cancer. I also believe that if this were a real experiment, then the doctor or doctors in charge should have considered the possibility of this woman's death and should have already made an agreement of some form with her in case of this situation. Although, if the patients family thought that the patient would not want to wait then I believe that they should have to take her off the machines not only to respect the family's wishes but also to prevent any legal problems that might be presented to the hospital.

HB
Nimitz High School

3/18/01
Ouch- what a tuff decision. This lady's wish was obviously to not exist in a vegetable state wired up according to the living will. If she prepared this living will when she was admitted to the hospital, then she knew from my tests that her tumor was regressing. Even with this knowledge, she still made the choice to be unplugged after ten days of unconsciousness on life-support. Being a good oncologist, I stressed to the woman the results that could happen if the tumor regressed to a manageable size. Yes, by keeping the woman on life support for a bit longer, she could come back and possibly live a normal life. By choosing to keep her on support, I might get the privilege of saving a life. But if this woman by some chance comes back with brain damage and will no longer be able to function in this world, have I really done the woman a favor. I do not wish to accept this kind of responsibility especially with the woman's family. There would be a legal

R. B.
Macarthur High School

3/8/01
I think that they should take her off life support. 1) Because if it was in her written will and she was in sound-mind when she wrote the will, then I think legally you have to do what it says - which is to take her off after 10 days. And 2) because if the side-effects of the treatment will do that to one person, then it probably won't change for other. So the scientist should figure out a way of avoiding those side effects (with an autopsy or something) rather than sending another already suffering patient into the hands of a life-support machine.

C.M.
Mansfield High School

3/8/01
One ethical issue is whether or not to go against the woman's wishes even though the experimental treatment is going well. I would take her off life support because she specified that in her will. The experimental therapy could be tried out on other patients; the outcome of their treatment could be observed.

C.R.
3/8/01

If it was the patient's wish to be taken off life support, then that should be done. No doctor should have the right to force a patient to live. Others would likely volunteer for the treatment, so the experiment could still be continued. Also, if the patient is kept on life support against her will that could seriously damage the reputation of the doctor, and by association the treatment.

JAM
Fossil Ridge High School

3/7/01

Because the woman had made a firm, non-arguable statement in her "living will" to stop euthanasia after the 10 day period, there is no doubt that the hospital should comply. It isn't only the woman's right to choose, but the hospital would have to worry about law suits and problems aroused by this one decision. If the hospital didn't follow the directions left in the will, what be the point in writing a will.

P. W. C.
MacArthur

3/7/01

I think that the woman should be taken off the life support because that is what she wrote in her will and you could always get another volunteer to test the treatment

J.C.
SHHS

3/6/01

This is a controversial issue, but I think that in this case the woman's wishes should be adhered to. When she agreed to participate in the experiment, I am sure she was aware of the consequences, some of which she knew might be fatal or harmful. When she was put on life support, the doctors were able to determine that the treatment was working, that it was causing the tumor to regress. At the end of ten days, however, I think the woman's wishes should be honored and she should be taken off life support. Those were the terms agreed to in the beginning, and should be followed in the end. The doctors should use the information learned from the experiment with the woman at that point and take it from there with other patients or methods that would enable them to learn more.

A.H.
MacArthur High School

3/6/01

A man, or a woman, has the power and right to determine their own life or death. Should this scenario in actuality come about, I feel that it is the hospital's duty and the oncologist's duty to remove the patient from life support? The patient has plainly stated that should she have to receive life support in an unconscious state for more than ten days, she would like to be terminated. This patient, hypothetically, has been receiving life support for ten days and should
be removed from life support. Should the hospital decide to keep her on life support, a large suit could possibly be taken against them from the patient's family? I do realize that critical medical research would be lost, but the desires and will of a living human being are far more important aspects to acknowledge than that experiment.

G. S.
MacArthur High School
3/5/01

I think that the oncologist should respect the patient's wishes. If he really wanted to test on this patient he should have informed her, or better yet ask her if he may continue to test her. In realistic terms, it would be illegal to go against a patient's wishes, even when she prepared a "living will." Anyway there are many more people with cancer that the oncologist can experiment on.

B.O.
MacArthur High School
3/5/01

By making a living will, the patient chose to practice her "right to die." After the Cruzan v. Missouri Health Department case, living wills became important and widespread. Although she is kept alive by life-support, she still has certain inherent rights, one of which is her wish to remove the life-sustaining devices after 10 days. No matter how much success I, as an oncologist, might gain, I must respect her right.

S.M.
MacArthur High School
3/4/01

Although new knowledge might be gained from prolonging the life of the patient, the doctor must respect the rights of the patient and end life support. Because each individual has the freedom to make his/her own decisions, the doctor must respect the will of the patient or he would be treating her as nothing more than a lab rat. Even if the doctor decided not to discontinue life support and the tumor was eradicated, questions about the relationship between the patient's heart failure and the treatment would arise and more experiments would be needed to verify that the treatment can successfully cure cancer.

MMB
MacArthur High School
2/27/01

I think that this ethics discussion is rather basic. I know of the ethical consideration of trying to further the study and produce an outcome of whether or not the experimental drug worked. However, I believe that it is the moral responsibility of the doctor to adhere to the living will of the patient and take her off of life support after ten days. In order to further his research, he should instead find another patient and see if the experimental drug works on them as well. His tests on that patient probably would not be valid because she went into cardiac arrest, and
therefore they are uncertain of what truly caused the regression. If I was the doctor, I do not believe that I would go against the wishes of the patient.

M.F.
Garland High School
2/26/01

If I were put in this situation, it would be very difficult to make the right decision. However, I believe the right thing to do would be to obey the woman's desires and shut the machine off. That is the ethical thing to do. I could always start the experiment on a new patient that hasn’t gotten as far in the cancer as the previous patient. It's her life and her decision to be taken off life-support. Her “living will” is her last known wishes and should be followed even though she chose to do this experiment, she never changed her will.

2/26/01

I would continue life support long enough to know if the experimental therapy can completely destroy the cancer. Granted, she wanted to be taken off life support after 10 days, but if she knew she could help others, she would not mind staying on. Didn't she start the treatment so she could help others, or possibly find a cure for cancer? Yes she wanted only to be on for 10 days but would you want to lose all this research and progress? I wouldn't. Also you could help more people and refine it so it would work better, she would want that. Plus she would not know if she was still on it or not, she probably chose 10 days to keep her family from having a large medical bill, and your research company would take care of the bill so I see no problem leaving her on life support. So yes, you should leave her on and watch the full effects of the treatment.

N.T.
2/25/01

If you leave the woman on life support then you will get the benefits of seeing if the tumor deteriorates and goes away, the results will be beneficial for future science references. On the other hand if you do as the living will states then you are respecting her rights, but you won't find the results about the tumor. I think that you should leave the woman on life support and find out the results because she won't know anyway since she is unconscious. The outcome of the woman will be the same and also you will benefit for the future patients with the same disease.

I.A.
Argyle HS
2/25/01

If I were an oncologist in this specific situation I would continue the use of life support and allow her to finish the treatment. Under this circumstance the will should be voided so that a cure for this type of cancer could possibly be found. Also, I do not agree that she would want to be taken off life support under this condition due to the fact that she went into cardiac arrest. She was most likely referring to her going into life threatening states caused by the cancerous tumor. She would have wanted to continue the treatment so that I might be able to save other lives. This would lead me to the decision of allowing her to stay on life support and possibly wait out the
unconsciousness.

2/25/01

If I was in that predicament and had to make that choice I would go ahead and leave the machines on after I made sure it was okay with her relatives to override her wishes. If they said no I would turn off the machines and find another patient who would stick with me the entire way until I was finished with my studies. Some of the ethical issues involved is you could go to a judge and explain what your reasons are why the machines should not be shut off or you could just find another patient who would stick with you.

S.C.
Argyle High School

2/25/01

The woman should be taken off life support. She was in her right state of mind when she signed the living will so I believe the doctor should obey her wishes, even though it would benefit others. It is morally right to obey all of her final wishes. I can see where people on the other side of the issue are coming from. I mean it might save peoples’ lives in the future, but there will always be another time to test this treatment. Legally her family cannot override her living will decision so why should the doctor? Overall the doctor should obey her wishes.

N.K.
Argyle H.S.

2/25/01

I believe in this situation that I would wait and see if the tumor got any smaller and I would not take her of life support. I would go against her will because you could save a lot of people’s lives by making this decision. I think the lady would want it that way to if she knew the situation of all this. If the tumor got bigger again then I would not try anything further and I would take her off life support like her will would want her to. Mainly I would just do it so that I could try to help other people fight cancer and I believe she would want that too.

T. W.
Argyle HS

2/25/01

If I were to ask a doctor to take me of life support machines I hope he would respect my wishes and do as I asked. I know she agreed to be a subject in the experiment but her condition and her right as a human being surpasses her oral agreement with the doctor in this type of situation. If you were able to be put to rest at a peaceful, unpainful stage of your dying life I know you would want to be respected enough where the doctors would do that for you and forget about the experiment enough to respect you as person.

J.M.
There are many ethical issues involved in this case. For one, a common issue is whether to take a person off life support. This creates many arguments and it is up to the person involved or family members to decide the right way of action. In this case, if the dying person signs a DNR (do not resuscitate) then it is in no contest that the patient is taken off life support. If a DNR is not signed then it is up to family members to decide the outcome. I believe, in this case, keeping life support on may allow the advancement of new cancer treatments at the expense of 1 life. In other words, it’s one life or the growing number of lives cancer takes every year. The only problem with this is that the decision goes against the will of the patient. I believe that the patient's requests should be granted and that the life support machines should be turned off and the experimental treatment be started over with another patient.

J. M. B.
Argyle High School

As an oncologist, or any doctor for that matter, I would have to follow the patients orders. It doesn't matter that I could be saving other lives because my patient obviously wanted to die if she was put on life support. I would take her off the life support and then try and find another subject to try my new treatment. A doctor must always have the patients' best interest in mind no matter the situation. She had prepared a living will stating she no longer wanted to live and that I would have to take her off life support. Her tumor may be regressing but her overall health is still deteriorating. So my treatment may be helping the tumor but it isn't necessarily helping her to live. I would have to follow her wishes and let her die. Then I would most definitely find another terminal cancer patient and ask for their help in agreeing to try my treatment. Then I could find out for sure whether my treatment really could save lives.

W. H.
Argyle High School

I believe that the oncologist should have taken the woman off the life-supporting machine, and allow her to die like she wanted. First of all she had stated in her "Living Will" that she wanted the hospital to turn off all the machines after ten days. Denying her that right would be going against what she wanted. Also if you kept her on the machines after ten days, the doctor would be breaking a contract (her Will). Second of all, the doctor could still easily test the experimental treatment by finding another cancer patient. So the doctor could let that woman pass away, and then treat another willing patient and he would have the same results as continuing to treat the woman. Finding another patient would bypass the moral and legal obligations of breaking the women's will. Thus once again the doctor should definitely take her off life support.

K.D.
Argyle H.S.
If I was the oncologist it would be my duty to turn off the life support since her will says that. Although if we left it one we could maybe know how to get rid of brain tumors and help millions of people everywhere that have brain tumors. We can't just use her as a guinea pig she still has rights even though she is unconscious. We have to do what she says so I would turn off the life support. It isn't right to keep her alive so we can see the experiments effects on the tumor. It is unethical to not do as her will says and would be going against the Code of Ethics.

J. C.
Argyle High School

In my opinion, keeping the woman on life support seems like a good idea to see if the tumor continues to regress. One reason would be so I could help out those with cancer because I would have known what it would be like to have cancer, and if there is any way to help you should help. Another reason would be if there is any possible chance for a cure it should be attempted. And even if she did die from therapy there is always another chance on someone else.

L. M.
Argyle HS

The doctor should not be allowed to keep the women on the machine. Her living will clearly states that she does not want to be kept alive after ten days. There are no exceptions to this in her will so accordingly there should be no alteration in her life. Doctor's ethics clearly state they should obey the rights of all patients. She has a right to die if she wants to. The doctor has no right to disobey this wish. If the doctor still wants to conduct tests he has more proof of the treatment working and more people are going to be influenced to participate. So he doesn't need her any more.

M. H.
Argyle HS
In the case presented, the physician has a duty to be responsible for anything that should happen to the patient with the testing. However, the patient's will should be placed first. In this one person, I think her wish should be granted, and your test should yield no results. However, further testing is necessary, and should be conducted on other patients similar to the previous one, to see if the eventual coma state was caused by other reasons besides the testing. Testing is a long and tedious process, but should still be performed if beneficial results are in sight.

A. J.
Azle High School

In this case it would be difficult for me to choose sides. On one hand I would have the wish of a know unconscious patient and the other a potential cure for a form of cancer. Although it would be hard for me to miss this chance to see if the new treatment would totally deteriorate the tumor, I think I would have to go with her living will and take her off her life-support. The only way I would keep her in comatose is if her family has given me permission to do so. Although it would be tough I think my patient is my utmost concern and not whether or not the treatment will work. With experimental drugs the doctor would have to have more then on case the drug worked in so this women is not a necessity to furthering the drug. There would be something to learn from this case though; the women's health started deteriorating around the time the tumor started to deteriorate. So not only would I take the women off life-support as she requested I would also reevaluate whether the medication I put her on is the reason her health deteriorated.

B. R.
Azle High School

Although both decisions require taking the woman off life support, I believe that the answer to this can be quite simple. The woman has signed a living will, acknowledging her decision to discontinue life support after ten days regardless of the results. A living will is usually not taken lightly and I assume that she has consulted her family and other professional doctors. A serious malpractice lawsuit could arise from using the body to perform experiments and then honoring the patient's wish in her will. The will specifically states that life support will end ten days after unconsciousness and life support. The oncologist's responsibilities are directed towards the patient's wishes and he must obey in order to produce ethical results. Although the results could help in the development of cancer treatment, the patient should be aware of this sort of situation and can write a clause into their will at the hospital-the patient's wishes are must come before the doctor's wishes. However, since this woman has signed her living will, the doctors should follow her requests and amend their methods for the future.

J. L.
Azle High School
2/23/01

Being a doctor you have the ethical duty to respect the patient's wishes, but in this case being that it might be able to save millions of other peoples' lives I think you should make an exception. I believe that I would ask the patients family if I could finish the experiment, if they agreed I would continue. If the patients' family disagreed I would feel obligated to respect their wishes.

H. M.  
Azle High School

2/23/01

This situation brings about many questions that require personal decisions. Are you capable to decide whether a person should live, or not? Should you sacrifice the experiment? I believe since she has prepared a living will, her wishes should be respected. You at least now have a basis to continue your work and you would not be "playing God." These issues involve a lot of thought and any decision made, should not be hasty.

C.  
Azle High School

2/23/01

I feel that you should turn of the life support. If she had enough concern to take the time to write a living will, then she means it. When she said ten days that is what she meant. There are plenty of other people who have cancer. After death, proceed to have an autopsy for further research. Ethically, she is a human being not just the experiment. She volunteered to be under this experiment but not to violate her, her rights, her ethics, or her will. She chooses to die in dignity.

S.  
Azle High School

2/23/01

In the situation presented to me, I would not turn off the patients' machine. Even though it goes against the patient's wishes, I feel the outcome maybe positive if she stays on life support longer. One reason is, if her health is deteriorating because of the treatment, then I would like to know what factors might improve the treatment. By improving the treatment, maybe I could help her and other patients. I also feel if I am able to bring the patient's life back to her, which is what was trained to do, she and her family will be grateful to me; and I will be happy with myself knowing I was able to help a human being.

P.N.  
Elkins High School
2/23/01

I would take her off life support because the drug seems to be making her health deteriorate. So it seems like, regardless of their effort, they're going to lose her. Plus, she said it was her will and you should be able to go along with the patient's wishes.

M.G.  
Elkins High School

2/23/01

I think that they should take her off the life support because she told them before that was her will. They should just look for another volunteer to give the drug to after they prove her cardiac arrest was not related to the experimental drug.

M. J.  
Elkins High School

2/22/01

As an honorable doctor, I would respect the wishes of my patient. The patient deserves to die in the way that she wishes; she obviously does not want to be hooked up to machines in order to prolong her life. Also, it is the legal responsibility of the doctor to obey the terms of the patient's living will.

B.P.  
Cedar Park H.S.

2/22/01

I believe that the "living will" should be followed and the life-support turned off after the ten days. Though it would appear that this experimental process is proving effective, the doctor does not have the right to violate the final wishes of a woman who knew her death would soon occur. Other cancer patients will be willing to participate in this doctor's study, perhaps even more people than before once the doctor establishes his/her reputation as an ethical and empathetic individual.

A.M.  
Cedar Park H.S.

2/22/01

Despite the fact that the research is important, the patient's wishes should come first. It would be wrong for the doctor to ignore the patient's wishes for their own gain. The doctor could find a different patient to try the experimental therapy on, and discuss the complications with them before hand to prevent this problem from happening again.

Cedar Park H.S.
I think that I would take her off life support since that is what she asked for before she went into the treatment. And, if her failure is not the cause of her downfall, then I think you could try it on someone else.

N.L.  
Cedar Park H.S.

I think that she should be taken offline support. She had a living will that states "all machines turned off after 10 days should she become unconscious and requires life support?" This is what that woman wanted and that should be respected.

E. W.  
Cedar Park H.S.

I think that, though it would be a huge break through to discover a way to cure cancer, it is the patient's right to have the plug pulled. If your treatment worked this well on that lady, you should have no trouble finding another person.

Cedar Park H.S.

I think it is very obvious that the women should be taken off the life support machine, since that was her wish, and she made out a "Living Will". I think it would be unethical if she was living against her will just to see if an experimental drug works.

AN  
Cedar Park H.S.

Disconnect her from the support. It would be selfish of me to not obey her will because of my experiment.

K. A.  
Cedar Park H.S.

As a person of ethics, I think she should turn off the machine because of the women's living will. In another light, she is trying to help other other women around the world with her type of cancer.
2/22/01

I believe the patient's wishes should be honored. The doctor did get some progress done and I think that the ethical thing to do would be to take the patient off the machines and continue to use the treatment on other patients with cancer who are eager to help in the cure. It is important to know that the patient did contribute a lot even though she died before the cancer was completely regressed and her help is probably a good incentive for others to also take a part in the treatment.

M.C.  
Cedar Park H.S.

2/22/01

Without a doubt, the woman should be taken off life support. Those were her wishes and her rights. The ethical issue is should a patient who is getting better from the original illness be kept alive even though there are other complications. To keep her alive against her will would be morally wrong even though it could have the possibility of making the experience a success. The experiment can wait for another patient who is willing.

H.M.  
Cedar Park H.S.

2/22/01

Although it may be possible for me to learn if the experimental therapy works which would save many lives if it does, I would turn off the life supporting machines and allow her to die. When the patient was in a reasonable state of mind, she had requested in the form of a living will that she wanted all machines shut off after ten days of requiring life support. As a professional doctor I feel it would be my duty to honor the will of my experimental therapy patient. Should I have considered the other route and continued my experiment the patient would have likely ended up dying anyway, after factoring in her already advanced cancer and her health continuing to fail. If by chance the patient had become cured and awoke by the treatment she surely would be delighted but would feel a sense of mistrust in my not honoring her will.

T. C.  
Argyle HS

2/21/01

Looked at from a strictly ethical standpoint, this question becomes very simple. Do you or do you not violate this woman's rights provided to her by the government for her safety, security, and general welfare? As a strong advocate of civil rights, I believe that the only thing to do would be to respect her wishes - if not for her sake personally, than for the binding document that she signed before her death. Does someone's new idea cease to make that document binding? I don't believe so. Also, the long term benefits of possible continuation of treatment are only hoped to help the medicine field and advance research in cancer treatment. But they are not guaranteed. This does not seem to be a fair reason to violate someone's rights. Research, lawfully, is restricted to consenting participants only. This is the only humane thing to do. With the astounding number of people in the country today suffering from cancer, why pick on the
lady who did not give consent? Her ten days is up, the only moral and ethical thing to do would be to pull the plug.

2/20/01

The case concerning the experimentally treated woman brings about many ethical questions. Do you, the doctor, have the choice of life or death over a person? Can you go against a person's wishes? Can you risk the chance of losing a hopefully profitable experiment that may save the lives of many other people? In this particular case, if I were the doctor, I would first consult the patient's family. They may be able to shed some light on the issue, and may help in the decision making process. Even though the decision would risk saving others' lives, I would respect her wishes, and let her rest in peace. At least now we know the experimental drugs may kill the cancer, and we could build from there. This problem is definitely complicated, and should take some thought, no matter what you decide.

A.H. Azle High School

2/20/01

It is my belief that the individual is more important than experiments and research. It is true that the experimental therapy could possibly destroy her tumor and continue to help other patients with similar conditions, but the woman specifically said that she wanted all machines turned off after ten days. If she were conscious, it would be a different story; however, she gave a "living will" for a reason, and I think it is only ethical to honor her request. Besides, there will most likely be other patients diagnosed with this type of cancer. If so, it would be wise to discuss the experimental therapy with these patients in extreme detail beforehand. This way, if anything should go wrong, you will know exactly what each patient wants to do and if he or she wishes to continue life support for further research.

J.B. Mansfield High School

2/20/01

This would be a difficult decision for any doctor, but I think I would have to leave the patient on life support. Even though her living will said otherwise. The possibility of saving millions of lives is enough to disregard the patients' bill of rights.

J.C. Sulphur Springs High School

2/20/01

I believe that they should take the lady off of the life support machines because that was her last wishes and they should honor that. They should find a different subject for their experiment that is willing to stick with the experiment.

L.S. Sulphur Springs High School
I would turn the machine off. It is not my body and even though she is going to die she still should have control over her own body and even though we might want to know something does not give us the right to just take over her body.

I would honor the patient's will and take her off the machines. It is not the doctor's right to keep her on life support when she clearly stated that she wanted to be taken off. The oncologist can always treat another patient with this experimental treatment and see if the same effects take place.

A.R.
Sulphur Springs H.S.

In this case, the major ethical issue involved is, of course, the request of a dying woman. I think it is quite clear that her request should be granted not only on an ethical basis, but on a scientific basis as well. The tumor in her body may be regressing, but continuing to perform scientific tests on someone who is having other health problems may create incorrect results for the test. Furthermore, the woman's cardiac problems may have resulted as a side effect from the drug for the tumor itself. Whether or not this is true will not be known unless other patients are also treated. Whenever scientific tests are done, more than one subject is used, and so, if one of the subjects to be used originally is disregarded from the results, the results from the test will not be affected too greatly. Other than this, the ethical issues are clear. The request of a dying woman should be granted if possible since there is no way she can force it to be granted. Therefore, all these reasons considered, it is best that the life support the woman is on be shut off in ten days according to her request, and other cancer patients willing to be tested should be used for the experimentation.

S.C.Dunbar HSEP

In this case, it is tough to decide whether or not to take her off life support. She did request to be taken off after ten days if there were no signs of progress, but doing so would leave questions about how effective the treatment was. If I was the doctor, I would want to keep her on life support, but I would consult her family members for consent. By allowing her to stay on those machines, we could find out how well this treatment works on her and whether or not her tumor would regress completely.

A.B.
Azle High School

I don't think that you should keep her going. She wants for them to pull the plug after ten days. If she lives, she could sue him, or never give them business again. If she dies, the family could sue for pulling the plug, when they think everything is getting better. If you keep on going, the
tumor may disappear, but everything else will get worse. Her health could get worse and something worse than the tumor could come up. What the doctor doing the experiment should do is to investigate what the experiment contains before the ten days are up. If you wait, your practically obligated to pull the plug. You could change the chemicals, or medicines used in this experiment.

J.B.
Mabank High School

2/16/01

So um I think the subject is pretty cool and all but this is really difficult. cause well you could get sued possibly if you don't pull the plug but also you could save allot of live if not the lady that was dying.

2/16/01

Well as an oncologist I would want to use the ill woman for the remainder of the experiment, but it is completely unethical to go against a person's will for their life and completely go against their requests and keep them alive any longer than they requested, even if it is in the best interest of themselves. This whole experiment is based on hope and taken a chance that is will be successful. Let's say that it does go well, and you do get your cure, will the person had you had to use against their will allow you to use their results and give you what you need to spread your data. People are not slaves or just test subjects and should not be use against their will even thought they are unable to be conscience to stop you.

J.S.S.G.

2/16/01

If I was an oncologist and I was in this situation, I would probably go ahead and just pull that plug. After all there are more people out there with the very same disease and they would do just about anything to get rid of it. And plus, she wrote a "living will" saying that she didn’t want to suffer on a life machine so I would consider that. the thing that I would worry about the most would be that the symptoms of cardiac arrest, deteriorating health, and having to go to the hospital that often could be side effects of the new medicine that you have given her. First test them on animals, and if all goes well try on humans. If side effects occur, take it off humans and go back to the analysis and study of this medicine and see what the problem is and try to fix it. And most importantly, it’s more that likely really important to the family of this woman to do what she says on her will. If she wanted to die on a computer she would have wrote that on her will.

J.H.
MABANK HIGH SCHOOL

2/16/01

My view on the ethics case that we have written in my science class is to induce a form of brain deadness to the patient, so you can administer all tests and make sure the cancer is going away, meanwhile fulfilling the patient’s needs for pulling the plug.
The ethical issues of this particular case include the patient's rights versus the advancement of medical discoveries. If the patient's wishes are carried out, then medical advancement could be delayed for the betterment and cure of every person after that patient's death. However, if the patient's wish to be cut off of life support after ten days is not honored, then the patient is being abused by the medical community, leaving both the doctor and the hospital in question susceptible to substantial malpractice charges. It must be emphasized that the patient employs the doctor, and the doctor is to service the patient according to her wishes. Therefore, for the doctor to ignore the patient's specific request would be not only unethical, but morally wrong. The patient has left the fate of her life in the doctor's hands. She made a conscious decision when she signed the living will requesting to be cut off of life support after ten days, and she undoubtedly expected that this wish be honored. Therefore, it is only ethically and morally sound for the doctor to turn off the life support machines and allow her to die, for this is her documented request. If the doctor were to continue life support long enough to determine the effectiveness of the experimental drug, then the doctor has usurped his power and responsibility and turned the patient into an unsuspecting guinea pig who has donated her life to science unknowingly. The wishes of the doctor and medical community do not make the rights of the patient null and void. Her rights must be respected and honored in the context of this medical situation.

K.M.
Garland High School

My decision would be to turn off the life support machines because it is the patient's wish. If the patient were to ask the doctor to unplug the life support, the doctor, no matter whether or not it is for the patient's own good, should acknowledge their wishes. Even though the research may provide a new treatment for cancer, it would be best to let the woman pass away and continue to experiment with animals to perfect the technique. The ethical issues are whether or not the doctor should turn off the life support, and, if the doctor were to unplug the machines, he would be going against his oath to prolong a patient's life as long as possible. Euthanasia is a very controversial subject. It deals with many different areas such as religion, morals, and even the love for the patients. However, if it were up to me, I would have to go along with the woman's wishes and turn off the life support.

M.N.
Sam Houston High School

If I were her doctor, I would leave it up to the family to decide. I know that is what she wants in her will, but if I wait an extra two days and she gets better? I believe it's worth the wait. She's not suffering anything because she is unconscious right? But if it's past a month or so and she is still in the same condition then I well take her off life support. It is also up to the family to decide.
you will have to ask yourself whether you are pro-life or pro-personal request. It is similar to the question about abortion. I am pro-life in any situation. She is doing what I believe to be suicide. She would also be helping thousands of other people with may be cures to the cancer. By enduring a little difficulty, she will be helping so many people.

To me I would turn off her life support because it's her last wish. As far as the study goes I would find more patients to continue on with the study. The cancer is a common form. There are many others patients that have this kind of cancer and we can do study with new patients. She has experience the pain and her will to live is gone.

I believe that if the patient had full knowledge of the possibility of the experimental drug being successful, she would have liked to contribute to the successful outcome. After all, she wanted to help advance science by offering herself to research. Would her desire change after 10 days? I believe that she probably signed the paper with the belief that ten days on life support would coincide with her demise... not the regression of her tumor and possible recovery from cancer. I say, wait and see what happens, and then after some conclusive results about the therapy are gathered... let her go.

I think that he should not turn off the machine because it could save her and that he might find the cure for the disease. Even though it is her will to turn off the machine, it is more important to save her life.

I think ya'll should pull the plug on her. She wanted it in her will because she doesn't want to go through with it any longer. It's her life so ya'll should respect it. It was her last wish so respect it and do everything necessary to give her what she wants. That is my opinion.

Well first and foremost, I would not stop the experiments. Yes, it is great the tumor is regressing, but even though she was hospitalized, KEEPS HER ALIVE!!! When and hopefully when she
gets better, analyze the findings and get ready to receive your Nobel Prize! Now, she did say to turn off all life supporting machines, but, we don't know what kind of cancer she had or what stage of the advanced cancer she is in that could have led to the hospitalization by itself. Maybe, because of the cancer, that is why she had cardiac arrest. Another thing to definitely do is to conduct this experiment on many other patients who are in the early stages of the tumor. Then should the same effect occur that leaves the patient hospitalized, either terminate the project, or suspend it for a period of time until you can find out what exactly should be done to cure the tumor without these hazardous effects.

S.
Sam Houston
2/16/01

When the woman agreed to be the first test in your experiment the doctor must of been aware of the woman's living will. If the doctor was aware of her living will, that means he agreed that all machines would be turned off. In this case you would have to respect the woman's wish. If you don't turn off the machines and the woman lives, I think she would be very thankful but angry at the same time. She would be angry that you didn't do what she told you to do. The doctor could then get into trouble with the court if she saw him, so if I was the doctor I would find another patient and say good-bye to the woman.

E. G., Jr
SAM HOUSTON HIGH SCHOOL
2/15/01

Since one of my ultimate goal in life is to become an oncologist, I believe this 'pretend' situation could make me begin to think about choices in life. To practice euthanasia or not to practice euthanasia...that is the ultimate question. Right now it is naive of me to answer this question with the ultimate truths since my lack of experience with patients. I will answer with the best of my judgment and knowledge. I believe I should consider all aspects of my action since there is no turning back. I will interview the family, and see their relation with the patient and their opinion on euthanasia. If there is a chance where I am able to revive her, I will give the family a statistic, if not I will be truthful. Another prospect to consider is what and how the patient requested while asking for the procedure. Basically, my considerations are chance for patient to revival, opinion of family, and also patient's words. In the future as I get into the Medical Field, I will put more thoughts into this issue. In the end I know that God will give me a clear mind to make the unregretable correct decision.

LC
JJ Pearce
2/15/01

I believe that the life supporting machines should be turned off. I believe this because it was her will. The will of the patient must always be considered before a doctor can perform a certain act. Even if one can learn a vast amount from the experimental therapy given to the woman, her will must come first. According to law, patients have the personal right to decide whether to institute, continue or terminate such treatment. As long as a patient is mentally competent, he or she can be consulted about desired treatment. When a patient has lost the capacity to communicate, however, the situation is different. But in this case the patient clearly stated her choice; therefore
the physician must take her off life support. In the state of New York, there is a law that requires clear and convincing evidence of what the patient would want. The woman in this issue wrote out a "living will," which is very clear on what she wants. The life support must be turned off.

J.F.
2/15/01

Euthanasia is one of the most difficult issues being debated in our time. Mercy killing questions our ethical and moral beliefs- one in which not everyone can agree upon. In this case, the 40 year old woman should have the right to die. If it were her will that the health care workers unplug all machines after ten days of unconsciousness, then so be it. I am, however, against euthanasia. I feel it is morally wrong for any health care providers to let their patients die while under their care. Even though religion should be left out in this debate, I strongly feel that a person's life should only be taken away by God and no one else. Also, if the woman was willing enough to risk her life for the experiment, then I feel that she should allow the experiment to finish before unplugging the machines.

2/15/01

The main ethical issue is that the lady specifically stated that she did not want to live off of life support, therefore the machines should be turned off because a living will is a legal document and should be followed as written.

A.R.
SHHS
2/15/01

in this case I believe that the switch for life support should be cut off. This is because it would take many more human "guinea pigs" so this one person would just be a drop in the bucket of further research needs. Plus this person makes a conscious decision to have the switch cut off after 10 days.

G. C.
Lake Highlands Freshman Center
2/15/01

If I were the oncologist in this situation, I would turn off the machine. The patient requested that if she was unconscious after 10 days and on life support that she is taken off. If she were to stay on life support and come back to being conscious, she could be upset that you didn't go with her wishes and take her off. It is a hard situation to be put in for any doctor. I would respect her wishes even though it was making the tumor decrease, but what happens if she wakes up after 11 days and suffers another cardiac arrest and has to go through this cycle again. It would be best to take her off and obey her wishes then to go along with the experimental drug and let it eat away at her body. I think it is or should be against the law to go against someone's dying wishes when they wrote it out for a doctor to follow their specific directions. The patient trusts the doctor to turn off the machine. If and when the patient wakes up, her health will probably not improve. I would definitely take the patient off life support, following her wishes and remembering that the drug deteriorated her overall health, and it probably won't get any better.
You should turn off the life supporting machines and allow her to die. Using an individual as a means to continue experimental research does not justify ignoring the patient's rights and especially their last request. The heart problems could even have been caused by the experimental drug; an aspect that could be investigated post-mortem. If the patient is or is not taken off life support, beneficial information has already been gathered, so why not respect that individual's choice. An ethical issue involved concerns the "living will" itself. Does the patient have the choice to refuse treatment after incapacitation occurs or is the doctor's disconnecting of life support tantamount to assisted suicide? I believe the choice of life when the patient is facing death should be left to that individual. No one knows the emotional and physical pain the patient has to deal with as a result of living. Even without the sympathetic aspect, the question of not disconnecting is an irresponsible policy because it could leave hundreds alive (but comatose) for years. This fate is truly repugnant to both the family and the patient. The experimental value of the treatment is still in question and can be tested at a later date, but the respect that a dying person deserves is absolute. The individual should be allowed to die peacefully. Too often, we get caught up in the sterile experimental system which necessarily excludes human emotion. By framing this question in terms of "physician" and "patient" (rhetoric that shapes a neutral, non-emotional relationship) I believe the same bias has already been imposed on this question. We should not let that get the best of us, though, by allowing an illegal and, from post the ten days, immoral experiment to continue.

First of all, the family should be consulted. If the family says it is okay to keep her on life support, then it is my responsibility as a physician to abide by the family’s wishes. However, if there is no family, the physician must abide by the patient’s wishes and take her off life support.

Students in my Health Science Technology class have agreed that the lady should be kept on life support to complete the experiment. She agreed in the beginning to the experiment. If the drugs are successful then they will help a lot of people. The doctor could possibly find another patient, but he would have to start all over again. That could take time. The drug could all ready have been on the market to save other patients. Leave her on the machines.

I think that the only situation in which it might be necessary to turn off the machines would be if her deteriorating health was caused by the treatment. Otherwise, it would be important to know the results of the treatment. Even though she made out her will, she also signed something saying that she wanted to participate in the experimental program. I think that the biggest ethical question involved is whether or not anyone has the right to decide if someone else is going to
live or die. Some could also argue on whether or not experimental treatments should be done on humans at all.

E.T.
Garland High School
2/14/01

If I were a physician, my duty would be to my patient, but as a researcher, I would want to know the results of my experiment. As I weigh out my options and responsibilities to my patient and to my research, I believe I would take her off the life-support machines. Even though leaving her on the machines might prolong her life long enough for me to find out if my experiment succeeded or not, she had already made her choice clear in her "living will". It's not my place to play God and decide whether a person should live or die. There're always more chances later on for testing out my experiments when I get more volunteers, and maybe it'll be more successful the next time around.

T.D.H.
Sam Houston HS
2/14/01

I would turn off the machine. This person wanted to die after the allotted time so I would hold to my promises. Any legal instances would be dealt with by the family the point being that this person wanted this.

J. S.
Pierce
2/14/01

I would let her live. She probably didn't know what the treatment would do when she entered the hospital, plus could come back at any moment. I know it is going against her wishes, but what if she changed her mind but couldn't tell anybody. If it were me, I would want to stay on the treatment because you never know how many lives could be saved with this new treatment. It is possible that she could regain consciousness once the tumor is gone.

J. H.
Sam Houston HS
2/14/01

I think that they should not shut off the machines as long as they continue to pay the hospital bill. They should ask the family what they think. It would be beneficial to a lot of people if they didn't shut off the machines, because they would discover a new treatment. So as long as the family is okay with the decision to leave the life support on, then I think that is what they should do.

J.S.
Sam Houston High School
In this case, if I were the doctor, I would turn off the machine in ten days like my patient requested. I would do that because her failing health could be a result of a reaction to the medication even though her tumor regressed. It is too late to put her through a number of tests to prove that because of the fatality of this cancer. The reason for cardiac arrest is assumed to be unknown; therefore her wishes should be carried. She may live once the machine is turned off. If it is her time to die, she will, but because of her failing health, all experiments should cease to prevent little or no damage to her body.

J.W.
Elkins High School

I think that the life support should be turned off and you should let the woman die in peace because that is what she said in her will. Anyway, you could always find someone else to try the treatment on.

Joey C.
SHHS

I believe that they should not go against her will since she already stated that she wanted to be taken off the respirator. They can proceed with their experiment only if they have the consent of the patient, and since they don't, I do not believe they have the right to keep her alive just to do experiments on her.

M.C.
J.J. Pearce High School

I believe that the lady should be taken off life support if that was her wish. In her will she clearly states her wishes. The doctors would have to get a written consent of some sort in order to perform the experiment. So, if she wants to be taken off life support after 10 days, then let her.

J.T.
Elkins High School

If I was the doctor, I would take her off life support. This is her request and she will be out of all pain and sorrow.

R.W.
Elkins High School
2/14/01

Had I been such an oncologist, I believe I would obey the woman’s wishes. It is her life, and should she decide to end it, it’s her right, especially if she is in suffering, or in a comatose state. True, she probably wouldn’t know if she was kept alive, but I wouldn’t be able to live with myself, knowing what I did/am doing to this woman, who made it very clear what she wanted. Ethically, perhaps some would justify keeping the woman alive, against her wishes, for "the greater good." After all, she is a perfect test subject, and shows positive results. But right then and there, by calling her a "test subject," callousness is conveyed I would neither expect nor desire in a doctor, whose sole purpose is to help or comfort. Logically, and from a purely objective viewpoint, the woman may actually have been harmed by the medication. Although the tumor regressed, her overall health deteriorated. Aside from the dilemma of letting her die or continuing experiments, the drug itself should be reexamined very carefully, for any side effects it may have had on the woman. Had the drug been the cause of the woman’s failing health, the moral conflict would be much easier (in fact, nonexistent).

A.L.
J.J Pearce High School

2/14/01

I believe it is a doctor’s duty to do everything he is capable of doing in order to save a life. If the doctor thinks that the patient has a great opportunity of recuperating quickly even though ten days have passed then the life-supporting machines should not be turned off. I am certain that she will not be infuriated on the contrary she will support the doctor for disregarding her "living will" and saving her life.

S.R.
J.J Pearce High School

2/13/01

There is obviously only one clear solution to this case. While it may be true that the research would certainly benefit from the prolonged observation of the tumor, each patient, as a citizen with the right to determine their own end of life issues through a living will, is the absolute authority on this matter. Some may argue this stand a selfish decision, as the research would eventually help prolong survival rates if not cure the actual disease. It is, however, above all, the patient’s decision, one that must be honored at all expenses. It is a travesty that the research would be halted and it is seems a waste that such a successful experiment will not have a chance to fully manifest itself, but, once again, it is the patient, and the patient alone that has the right, ethically and legally, to end their life.

M.M.
J.J. Pearce High School
The main ethical issue involved here is that you should respect a person's last wishes. I don't think it is right to sacrifice the patient's integrity, and use unwilling patient as lab rat. In my opinion I believe the patient living will should be respected. It would be heartless and cruel to let her suffer in order to improve your knowledge on any specific thing.

R.
SHHS

There are many ethical questions brought up by the cancer patient and her situation. The main moral concern is if any one individual possesses the right to control a person's life, after they specifically determined their own futures. In our situation, the 40-year old woman agreed to be treated. Our tests have reduced the size of her tumor, but she has taken ill and now is transported to the hospital. There at the hospital, she slips into a coma, but not before she could make a specific request of being taken off all life support after ten days. The ten days pass, but there is not a decision to be made if she should be taken off life support or to keep her alive for the sake of further research. The determining factor is that the patient made a specific demand relating her life, after she agreed to the treatment, and every individual must respect that request. Once again, science consistently pushes the envelope of moral ethics, but we should never go so far as taking control of a life that is not our own.

VAC
Sam Houston HS

Since the patient had prepared a "living will", she was aware of the risk in taking the experimental medicine in the first place and had anticipated for the worst. It was her request for the life support machines to be turned off after ten days had she become unconscious, which she did, therefore her request should be honored. One of the ethical issues involved includes choosing whether or not to override a patient's request for the benefit of medical research that could help other patients with the same disease. Even with this considered, the doctor should respect his patient's will and honor her request.

TNL
Sam Houston High School

I would take her off of life support because even though her tumor regressed, her health got progressively worse and I would want to fulfill her "living will", which requested that she be taken off after ten days. Keeping her on life support would just delay the inevitable and for the sake of the patient and her family, I would take her off. I would find another patient who would be willing to undergo the same treatment and start over, hopefully finding out whether or not the treatment works fully.

A. B.
I think the doctor should do as she requested. He should not have the power or authority to do as he wishes with her body. She does, however, and since she requested to be taken off life support after 10 days, then she should be taken off. No questions.

T.D.
Azle High School

I think that the right thing to do is to respect the woman's wishes. There is so much that you have to consider. This woman has a written will that legally states what should happen in her life. I see it as if the woman lives, after 10 days (her wishes) and something goes wrong then the doctors or researchers may face a lawsuit.

A.C.
Elkins High School

The ethical issues in this scenario involve the concerns of the patient interest vs. medical research. Even though my research may be progressing, I must respect my patient's decision to be withdrawn from life support after ten days. If I were not to respect her decision, I would violate her rights to choose life or death. The difference between using rats and humans in medical research is that humans have a right to life.

E.H.
Elkins High School

I think that as an Oncologist I would have the responsibility of respecting the woman's rights. I believe that this will not affect my research. In researching a theory, one test is not enough; you need tens if not hundreds of tests before your experiment can even be accepted much less proven. I would just let the lady go because for all I know the lady may not be in life support because of the cancer; it could be for another disease and I would be keeping her against her will

J.A.C.
Elkins High School

I would not stop treatment. I would wait to see what happens with the medicine. I think that would be better because it could help her to live a better life. They might find out that the medicine works and it can be used on other people.

H.R.
Elkins High School

Ethical Decisions always create controversy, but a living will is looked at as a legal document. In my opinion the Oncologist should respect the "living will and testimony". The woman clearly states that she does not want to be on life support after 10 days, if she should become unconscious. This is the last known written wish. Ethically her wish should be adhered to.
S.G.
Lawrence Elkins High School
2/13/01
I think you should cut-off her life support because it was her "living will" to turn off the machine after ten days. Ethically it is not important about the drug, but her "will" to or in this case not to live. Ethically you must cut her off.

J.R.
Lawrence Elkins High School
2/13/01
I believe that a person's God given right is to live and to die. The one thing she can do within her own right at this point is to decide which way she wants to end her life. Though the drug may help destroy the tumors of cancer patients, and it may save many lives in the years to come, her life is the most important in this situation. She said specifically that after 10 days she would want to be removed off of life support and her wishes should be respected.

T.T.
Lawrence Elkins High School
2/13/01
My stand on the case is that we should allow her to die. The patients have the right to chose if she wants to live or die. The issue is the right to chose vs. the welfare of the majority. The constitution upholds the liberty of the individual and wars are fought over freedom of choice. But if we contradict our actions and ignore this patient's will, then we'll be using her as a lab rat.

V.G.
J.J. Pearce High School
2/13/01
I would like to start off by stating that before any doctor can begin their career or profession and treat people they have to take an oath or vow to take care of their patients and rescue them the most paramount way as possible in the time of need. But if they are wished to discontinue their effort under the terms of a living will, which is consider a legal document. Then evidentially the doctor would have to go through with the procedure and their patient would have to die as their wish.

TV
2/13/01
When a person goes through the process of writing a "living will" it should be honored. Although keeping this patient on machines that will keep her alive physically, and it may help other people, by law she should have her will respected. If they are adamant the treatment will work, they should find another patient who is will to stay on life support.

M.G.
Elkins
2/13/01

I honestly feel the doctor should fulfill the woman's last wishes and let her die. I understand the doctors' desires to see if the treatment worked on the tumor, but they have to do what she asked; it's just the right thing to do.

K.S.
Elkins

2/13/01

the way I feel about the situation is that I feel that the doctors should take her off life support. There may be a certain reason why she wants all machines to be turned off. There is no reason why the doctors should try and be heroes. They may end up being a problem if they don't grant wishes.

M.K.
Elkins

2/13/01

I think that they should respect the woman's decision, but I can understand why the doctors want to continue life support. Finding a cure for tumors is an ethical thing, but they should do tests on other patients, rather than a patient that does not wish to continue the life support.

S.C.
Elkins High School

2/13/01

I feel that the doctor should always respect the client's wishes. If the doctor does not follow those wishes, the family will probably respond with legal force.

J.P.
Elkins High School

2/13/01

I believe that this particular patient should be kept on life support to be able to see the results of the treatment. So far the tumor has reduced its size gradually and doctors should keep up the treatment to record any significant changes that may help others in the future.

A.R.
Elkins High School

2/13/01

I would take the women off life support because that what she asked. You can always get another new subject to use the experimental treatment on. It would not be right to keep her on life support for more than 10 days. If that's what she asked for then so be it.

J.B.
Elkins High School
If I had a patient with advanced cancer I would not turn the life supporting machine off. I would like to go through with the treatment that I am using. I would like to see if it will succeed or fail so I would know how to improve this treatment to make other patients well. I would like to save my patients lives before pulling the plug.

J.B.
Elkins High School

If I were an oncologist, I would honor the rights of the patient and remove her from life-support after ten days. If she made a living will before becoming unconscious, it would be very unethical to ignore her wishes. After allowing her to die, I would perform the experimental therapy on another cancer-stricken patient and watch for progress. Should the next "test patient" undergo cardiac arrest or deteriorating health, I would conclude that the experimental treatment is too dangerous to be used on humans.

T.H.
Elkins High School

I would keep her alive long enough to see if the cancer regressed fully. If in this period of time she was to awaken, I would explain to her why I kept her on life support. I would help her recover, but if she was to become unconscious, I would let her die, if she asked me too.

J.G.
Elkins High School

If I was an oncologist and I received a patient who wanted to be the first to help me with a new experimental treatment program, I would try to do my best to help her so that I may also help many other people. While treating this patient she begins to have a regression of the tumor. I send her to the hospital and she suffers cardiac arrest. She is in need for life-support. The woman has prepared a "living-will" and the ten days pass. I have decided that I would like to continue life support long enough to learn if the experimental therapy can completely destroy her tumor. Immediately, I would call the family and discuss with them her situation. I would explain to them that if I continue life support there may be a way to treat cancer. By her wishes, I would pull the plug, unless the family decides otherwise and allows me to continue this experience.

R.S.
Elkins High School

I believe that since it was her dying "will" that she has the machine turned off after 10 days...then the researchers should respect that. She has not only put her life on the line by giving herself to this research, but has also made an understandable, and reasonable, attempt...
to help save others as well. For that very reason should be the reason that the doctors and researchers turn off her machine after 10 days no matter what the circumstances.

M.H.
Nimitz High School

2/12/01

My stand on the case is that we should allow her to die. The patient has the right to chose if she wants to live or die. The issue is the right to chose vs. the welfare of the majority. The constitution upholds the liberty of the individual and wars are fought over freedom of choice. But if we contradict our actions and ignore this patient's will, then we'll be using her as a lab rat.

V.G.
J.J. Pearce High School

2/12/01

Would you pull the plug on someone that is about to die or would you keep them on life support? I would pull the plug because you wouldn't want to see one of your loved ones or you would want yourself to suffer like that.

K.T.
Allen High School

2/12/01

I would like to start off by stating that before any doctor can begin their career or profession and treat people they have to take an oath or vow to take care of their patients and rescue them the most paramount way as possible in the time of need. But if they are wished to discontinue their effort under the terms of a living will, which is consider a legal document. Then evidently the doctor would have to go through with the procedure and their patient would have to die as their wish.

TV

2/12/01

I think no one person should have the right to decide when and how a person should die. In medical aspects, a doctor could continue the treatment and see if it worked but it would be against the law. A living will is a legal contract that that person signed and has to be obeyed. A doctor has no right to go against a patient that stated she wanted to be disconnected ten days after being on life support. I think keeping the machines on would be wrong in many ways. One the other hand, the humane thing would be to honor the patient's wishes. If I were a doctor, I would turn the machines off, no questions asked. Just because that patient wanted the machines turned off doesn't mean that another person will. I'm sure some more people will come along and want to try the same treatment, why risk doing something wrong when you can just try it another time. The right thing to do is to turn the machines off and respect that person's wish.

K.
Sam Houston High School
There are many factors to consider in this case. But, perhaps the most important is whether or not the patient's sudden deterioration in health, and ultimately, cardiac arrest was caused by the experimental drug? Let's say the drug did cause the patient's sudden decline in health. We already know that the drug caused her tumor to regress. There is no dispute about that. But, is the regression really worth the pain of physical deterioration, caused by the drug? We must first take into consideration that this patient was already in the advanced stages of a fatal cancer. Most of her body was already weak from the spreading cancer and increasing treatments. She came into this experiment looking for a last hope, one that could still save her life. It really is no surprise that she went into cardiac arrest, considering her initially frail disposition. I think that the subject in this case is not the most "statistically reliable." considering her previous conditions. Cancer at such a late stage usually kills no matter what. Now, putting that all aside, all this leads up to whether or not the doctor should "pull the chord." There really isn't anything he can do about it. Say, he was to wait until the tumor was completely destroyed, which say, took 15 days. What would he do after that, cut off all life support and risk a law suit? You see, the patient has a living will that specifically says that she wants all life support to be cut off after 10 days. To me, if the doctor were to keep her alive, it would seem as if he were using her situation and ignoring her rights and opinions just to see his drug "go through." The patient also has rights that must be respected. And since this is a case where the patient herself has specifically noted that she wants all life support to be cut, the only thing the doctor can do is respect that wish. Now, if the patient had gone into a comatose and had not been able to say anything before, then the case would be very different. I know that I would want to see the patient recover from her tumor. And when it comes down to whether or not the doctor should "cut the cord" my opinion is that he should wait. I know if I were his patient, I would want a chance to live if the tumor was regressing. But looking at this case from a strictly objective point of view, the frank truth is that the doctor cannot do anything about it and must cut off all life support in order to respect the patient's wishes.

A.V.
Dunbar High School

I think that as the doctor, I would not allow her to die, because it is wrong that a person should choose to die. True, her conditions aren't improving, but they haven't worsened, and her tumor is continuing to regress. She might come to consciousness in 12 days, or 2 weeks. Besides, from the medical standpoint, the experiment is working. Would she want to terminate all the work that you and other doctors have done just so she can die earlier? That doesn't sound reasonable.

J.Z.
Pearce High School

The patient specifically requested a written "living will" expressing her desire to discontinue life support after ten days. We must all show considerations for her decision, even at the expense of not being able to complete the experimental therapy. There are several other cancer patients out there who are willing to try new treatments. Why not use them and respect the wish of a dying woman?

H.P.
Sam Houston HS
2/11/01
Technically her will should be followed and the life support systems be turned off. Personally, the treatment could be the cause of the unconscious state therefore the treatment should be complete and once discontinued monitor to see if there is a change in her condition. If no change in her condition appears then discontinue life support. Though the damage caused by the treatment could be irreversible therefore the treatment should be discontinued immediately and see if her condition changes.

2/11/01
If I was the Oncologist in that situation, I will choose to continue her life support long enough to learn if the experimental therapy can completely destroy her tumor because if the experimental therapy does work, then there would be an astonishing medical breakthrough which can save many people’s lives. I understand that the patient in the situation has already prepared a "living will" to turn off all machines after 10 days, but if we do continue to proceed with the experiment, there will be a great possibility to find a cure to destroy tumors which can save many other patients in the same situation.
C.W.
Sam Houston High School

2/11/01
The situation for me (the oncologist) is a simple yet difficult one. It is simple in the fact the will clearly states that after the 10 days have passed, all machines should be turned off. Yet I realize that if I wait a little longer, I can see if my experiment has turned out to be a success. The ethical issue involved is a big one. Clearly, a matter of personal gain at the probable suffrage of another. Thus it would be wrong if the machines would still be going on after the limit my voluntary patient issued upon me. Plus, just because the tumor would be gone doesn't mean that the illness and problems the patient is suffering would be gone as well. I can't betray a patient that trusted me to some extent just for my own gain to see if my experiment turned out well. Thus, I would respect my patient's wishes and turn the life-support off and let her die. The fact that even though the tumor improves but her overall health still remains terrible only supports my opinion, because even though I feel I am getting somewhere, my patient certainly doesn't feel the same. Additionally, it should be noted that the decision for me to or not to turn off the life support is not necessarily mine. It may be the hospitals, relatives, or the laws based on the living will. Then, the situation would be out of my hands.
A.D.A.
P.L. Dunbar High

2/10/01
I would definitely do as the patient says since it is against her wishes to not turn off all machines. What are the chances she is going to improve after 10 days of unconsciousness? If I waited because her tumor was regressing and finally gets destroyed, chances of her dying from something else was great because her overall condition never improved. By all means, it is her life and what she chooses to do with it is up to her.
C.T.
Sam Houston HS
2/9/01

In this particular scenario, I am an oncologist treating a woman with an experimental treatment program. My main objective is to find a cure for her type of cancer, but my duty is to protect the people, mind, body, heart and soul. If my treatment reduced her health to where she wanted to be taken off of life support, I would respect her wishes. For the woman, to have a treatment for her cancer not work would be devastating and to have her doctor not respect her decisions after she could no longer care for herself would be even worse. My role as a doctor is to help the people, even if it is just one. If the treatment shows that it can do prospective good if it is modified a little bit then I can always try it out on other willing volunteers. The ethical issues involved are whether or not I continue the treatment or respect the patient’s wishes. If I continue the treatment, I could find something that would revolutionize

A.J.
J.J. Pearce

2/9/01

Despite the desperate need for progression in health care, a human life is too delicate to "toy" with. Dead or alive, or on the verge of death, a patient's life is too significant to ever be violated. Ethical and moral values of the doctors are especially important in the absence of the patients' knowledge or when a patient is too ill to speak for their self. If the terms of the contract did not thoroughly explain that she would be treated at this stage of her illness, she should be taken off of life support as soon as her condition gets worse. The patient's health should be the main priority in this case, even though we are looking for a cure to the cancer. The essence of a human life is too precious to be sacrificed, even for a medical breakthrough.

O.A.
Dale Jackson Career Center

2/9/01

I think that the woman's dying wish should be fulfilled. If she wanted the machine cut off in ten days then it should be shut off. There is no difference just because she isn't responding. She should still be respected as if she was alive and well. The scientific experiment can be continued on someone else. There are many people that have cancer and can be just as good patients as she was. If she knew that the experiment was working she probably wouldn't have said to cut life support off but she didn't know. The scientist should have communicated with her. Therefore I say that the woman should have her wish fulfilled and the life support cut off. Just making the tumor disappear will not make the woman live. The cancer is disappearing now and her condition is no better. The scientist needs to find an experiment in which the tumor can be destroyed while the patient gets better. I just don't see the significance if he can't of his experiment. It needs to help her not make a lab rat out of her.

2/9/01

I believe that if it was me that I would go against her orders and keep her on the machines to further my tests. I say this because if the tumor was getting smaller then if it goes away completely then I would have a way to save a lot of others lives by this testing. I would also keep her on the machines because she has a fatal form of cancer and is going to die soon anyways. Even though she would want us to turn off the machines, I think that she would be happy because we are taking her body to do the testing and if it works she would be very happy that she volunteered because she helped us save others lives in this way.
In my opinion I think that you should further your studies to see how it is going to turn out. By doing this you may have a chance to save many others lives. In all good experiment you have to use a Ginny Pig and this woman agreed to go through with the procedure. Even though she said she wanted to be taken off the life support after 10 days, she agreed to help with the experiment. That's why I think you should keep on studying.

C.A.W
Sam Houston High

The two conflicting issues are whether to honor the patient's wishes or defy her wants in the name of saving other lives. On one hand, the woman might have strong beliefs, moral, religious, or otherwise, about not being kept on life-support. For whatever reason it was obviously important enough for her to specifically request to be taken off life-support. On the other hand, she is basically already dead and keeping her on the machines will not affect her (she's not going to know the difference). She never gave a reason why she wants to be taken off the machines, and when she made the request she may not have been aware of the importance of the experiment's results. Plus, if the treatment works many other lives could be saved. Yet, no matter how beneficial it would be to the scientific community and other cancer sufferers, the woman made the request and it should be honored. The scientist should find another patient to test his drug on, one more willing to put the lives of others before their dislike of life-support machines.

K.S.
JJ Pearce High School

In my opinion, if she had a living will where she wanted to turn the machines off after 10 days of her unconsciousness and let her die...I think they should respect her and do what she has requested so she can die happy and they wouldn't have to worry about fulfilling her will if they just do what she says....even though she might have wanted them to continue the research and find the cure, she didn't state it in her living will that she wanted them to continue the research. Therefore, they should try the new experiment on another patient with a similar case of the cancer who agrees to go through it because she might have not even wanted to go through the treatment anymore after her death because she's already gone through too much and she doesn't want to go through anymore.

I would turn off the life supporting machine. Although, others would disagree with it, it's what I would do. I'm sure the patient would have wanted you to continue your study because she risked her life for your experiment. But since that specific type of situation had not been discussed, I think the right choice to make would be to turn it off. Because it was her wishes and you should respect them as a thank you for her contribution to your studies. You shouldn't assume that she would have wanted you to continue with it. Even though you really think you know what she would've wanted, you shouldn't assume 'cuz all it does is reflect a selfish part of
you. I'm sure a new patient will be able to continue the experiment. So, I would just do what they asked.

M.R.V.A.
Fossil Ridge High School
2/8/01

It seems to me that there are many questions concerned about ethics. First of all, there was a will, asking for the machines to be turned off. You should respect what the person has asked for. They may feel as though living off machines is already death in itself. Then against the other side to this question is that if she is kept alive and her progress is monitored the life of many others could be saved from the act of one person. The ethics behind such a case is hard to decide. Do you honor the will of one or the will of many? I don't think that question can ever fully be answered. After all many lives are at stake.

2/8/01

I believe the woman, in this scenario, should be kept on life support, despite her wishing to be taken off. I feel if such a situation where to arise, the chance of a cancer treatment being found is of upmost importance. She did agree to do the study, and that would make a person infer that she deeply cared to have a cure found. Don't get me wrong now; I respect the life concerning decisions made by dying people. And I know people in these situations understand what is going on, but an unconscious person is hardly aware of the miracles being worked by the treatment. If they knew their cancer could be cured and be returned to full physical health, it is more than likely that they would be willing to endure a journey to recovery, no matter how interminable it may be. The prudent decision would be save her life so the study has the chance to save thousands, possibly millions of lives. If scientists ever want to find a cure, they will have to give experiments a chance to be lucrative, or forever head a forlorn study. To deny this type of opportunity would even further exacerbate the hopes of other cancer patients being cured. And I think (and everyone else thinks) that it would take a complete misanthrope to refuse the chance to save thousands of humans.

P
Fossil Ridge H.S
2/8/01

I think they should turn off the machine and let her die b/c that is what she stated she wanted in the first place. There will be other cases to try the experiment and the dr. already has some knowledge that the treatment can work. Let her die.

2/8/01

I believe that yes, it is in a way wrong to keep her on life support when it is against her wishes, but there are more reasons to keep her on life support than let her die. First of all, if you could save her life while treating the cancer, she might possibly be able to get off life support if she was cured and became conscious again. Secondly, the woman already said she would allow experimentation on her cancer, so the doctor should still be allowed to proceed with his experiment. Thirdly, if they took her off life support, she would die anyway, so why not try to find a cure for cancer, and maybe be able to save millions of lives? If she was still conscious and was able to make decisions, but knew she was going to become unconscious and still have her tumor regress, she would probably allow the experiment to continue. Therefore, I would continue life support long enough to learn if the experiment therapy can completely destroy her
tumor. I would also check to make sure that the treatment therapy was not what made her unconscious in the first place.

E.W.
Argyle High School

2/8/01

In no way should you keep her on life support to see if the treatment works. First of all it goes against all morals in the fact that you are playing god in going against her wishes just for your medical experiment. That's great if you could of found a cure if you kept her on life support, but it's just wrong. Second you are going against her right to die when she wants to. She goes ahead and signs this thing and yet she is kept alive. And also in no way is she your property. It would go against all morals of a human. If you did keep her alive against her will you would be slapped by some many laws suits it wouldn't be funny.

B.M.
Fossil Ridge High School

2/8/01

If I were in the situation proposed in the "Interactive Case for February-March 2001", I would have a very difficult decision to make. I believe that if I thought that it would be possible for the patient to regain consciousness once her tumor were destroyed, I would continue the treatment in that hope. If it were clear to me that my patient would continue to need life-support even if her tumor were destroyed, I would obey the patient's wishes and turn off the machines. In other words, the only reason I would disobey the patient's wishes, would be if I believe the patient might regain consciousness with further treatment.

M.F.J. J. Pearce High School

2/8/01

The ethical issue that is raised by such a controversial case is one of the quality of life of the woman versus the sanctity of life of the potential beneficiaries of the experiment. The life support machines ought to be turned off because the woman was a coherent, competent, autonomous agent when she made her decision. To deny her request, in fact mandate, to remove her from life support would trivialize the concept of free will. Granted, the medical breakthroughs have a potential benefit to the rest of society, but there are several problems with this justification. First, just as society is generally not allowed to tread on individual rights when we are conscious, they ought not to be allowed to when we are unconscious. Next, other volunteers can be injected with the medication and be studied, the woman in question is not the end all be all of the study of cancer. Finally, there is a large potential that the correlation between the administered drug and the debilitation of the woman's physical state of affairs is very high.

E.A.
Garland High School

2/7/01

I think this ethics case is very interesting. I do think that this could actually have happened many times before. To me there are many choices that you could choose to make. First I feel that you should respect this woman's wishes by letting her go. This is a major ethics problem because your heart tells you that this is what she wanted but you think to yourself that if we waited longer maybe you could save many others. Second, if you do let her live on life support after the time
she wanted to be taken off you could save many like I said but you could also be able to see where you went wrong if it didn't work. All the work you had done would have gone down the drain. To let this woman die would have you lose all chances of finding a cure until a later date. Third, you might consult the family of this woman and see how they would like you to handle it for they may swing either of the two ways. Personally I think this would be a hard decision for me to make for a life is in your hands and maybe even many lives. I think I might consult those closest to her and see what they think she would want done even though she said in the living will she wanted to die. If I were the woman's kin I would suggest that they continue with the process because this one life could help many suffers like her. I don't know how I would really handle that situation.

C.D.
Fossil Ridge High School

2/7/01

My response to this is as followed I believe as a human being you should respect the patient's wishes. But also you should try to find out as much as you can about the project. This is a tough decision to make. I would have to go ahead with the patient's request. You already have seen progress in the treatment so I would take what I had gathered and move on. The gift of life and people is more important than any project.

J.J.

2/7/01

In the case of the forty year old woman with cancer, the oncologist would have to heavily weigh whether to respect her wishes or to keep her alive for science. If I was the oncologist performing this research, I would feel obligated to respect her wishes and let her go. Then I would go back to work and try to find the flaw that caused her health to deteriorate. But then I would still not know the new treatment's full capabilities. On the other hand because of the millions it could save, if her family gave permission to allow her to stay on life support until I saw the full effects of the treatment on the tumor, I would be okay with keeping her alive.

2/7/01

I think that if the woman's wishes were known that they should be respected. If she did not want to be left on life support, you should not leave her on it. If you wanted to continue tests while she was on life support, you should have gotten her consent to do so before she was in that position.

MHS

2/7/01

I think that I should follow the patient's wishes. She had obviously thought that something could happen and had written her living will. She said that she wanted to be taken off life support after 10 days, and that's what should be done. It was her decision, and it isn't our right to disregard it and do what we want. If she had said that it was okay before she got sick it would've been different, and continuing the experiment would've been fine. As the situation is, though, I don't think that I have the right to make a decision that goes against her will.

E.C.
MHS
As a physician I have the responsibility to do what is best for my patients. My patient in this case agreed to be the first subject in my new experimental treatment program. Before she began the treatment her cancer was already advanced. The patient told me if after ten days she becomes unconscious and requires life support she wants all machines to be terminated. Since ten days have passed, it would be ethical for me to disconnect all machines. The next time I try this experiment, I will possibly try to find someone whose cancer is not as advanced, so I can see if it completely destroys the tumor.

N.J.
Elkins High School

In this dilemma, there are several factors to be considered. The patient agreed to participate in the study knowing that there is a possibility of various risks. It is undetermined though, if the patient’s deterioration is due to the experimental treatment, her cancer, or other outside risk factors. Although the treatment seems to be reducing the tumor, it could also be causing the patient’s health to decline. Since the patient made a living will that stated she did not want to be on life support, it is ethically and lawfully wrong to disobey her orders. Even though this treatment could be a possible cure, it would be best to follow through with her wishes and terminate life support. The oncologist could find another patient to try the experimental treatment on, which would also help determine if the treatment causes the complications seen in the first patient.

J.M.
Elkins High School

This case causes a lot of issues to consider. Hopefully, the tumor would disappear before her ten day period has ended. Knowing that this is unlikely, choices have to be made. For the doctor, the main ethical issue is the patient's desire to turn off the life support after ten days. It is not the doctor's fault for him or her wanting to wait and see the result of the tumor because it is human nature for anyone to want to see their experiment done to the fullest, especially when it is going well. However, in this case it goes against the patient's desire, which deals with the Code of Ethics. The Code of Ethics clearly states that "a professional must respect the rights of each client." Keeping all moral and ethical issues forward, the professional should put his or her personal choices aside and do what the patient requests, turn off the life support. Our world has a lot of disease and cancer, and awaits the right treatments; however, every human being has his or her own rights and society has plenty of time for experimentation and progress.

A.D.
Elkins High School

I would first examine my patient to see that, although the tumor is shrinking, the treatment could be causing her physical deterioration. If her deterioration is not caused by the treatment, I would then look to see if my patient had a good chance of recovery from life support and then weigh the consequences. The woman wanted to be taken off of life support, I believe, in the case that she would be a vegetable. If I see that she can recover, I would keep her on life support and
contact her family and hear their wishes. If she is to be a vegetable, I would take her off life support.

R.W.
Elkins High School

2/7/01
Since the woman signed a will saying that after 10 days, if she was connected to any machines that she would like them all turned off, I think that her wish should be carried out. The tumor has regressed but her health is still deteriorating. If she wanted to change her will, she had 9 - 10 days to do it. Therefore, I am assuming that regardless of what took place or have taken place, she would still like to end her life if on life support.

Elkins High School

2/6/01
Since this is not a case about legal matters but a case of ethical matters I am not concerned with the legal matters of living wills and/or an appointment of a health care agent (the two main choices in the U.S., 46 states including Texas, permit both). The decision, for me would be heart wrenching. For as much as I’d like to honor a dying woman’s rights and wishes, I would also like to think that she would understand the major role she plays in this great development, no matter what the outcome may be she’d be very instrumental to prove or disprove this. I would wait until the experimental therapy can completely demolish the tumor. Before that, perhaps to relieve some of the guilt off myself I would contact the family and query them about their wishes and perhaps, if needed, change their opinions by arguing my points. The points being that, first off, she may save many lives and maybe even her own. If she was willing to participate, it can be assumed that she had a will to get better, not to die and that should be the first priority. If the experiment did not work, then that would save the trouble of getting some other patient to participate and perhaps, in turn die because the treatment would also not work for them. The first patient would be dying anyway, whether it is at the 10 day mark or at the end of the treatment when results are yielded. Since the patient is in a state of unconsciousness she cannot suffer. But things done are easier said, for it is easier to fight for principles than live up to them.

E.V.

2/6/01
In this particular case, there are two main issues involved. First, does the oncologist respect the patients wish to be taken off of life support? Or does the oncologist continue this medical research that could prove life-saving to many millions of people around the world. If he goes with his patients wish, then revolutionary research might end up as garbage. But should he choose to continue his research, he is totally defying his patient’s wishes. I strongly believe that in this situation, the doctor must respect the wishes of his dying patient. Although a massive historic breakthrough might be eminent, the oncologist has a moral obligation to respect his/her patients’ decision...even if that wish be not being revived. The Hippocratic Oath taken by doctors states that they will, to the best of their ability, make their patients comfortable and it is this oath that this oncologist must abide by. On the brighter side of things, there is bound to be other patients like this 40 year old woman who would be more than happy to take place in research like this.

N.A.A.
PL Dunbar HSEP
2/6/01
In my opinion I do think that the oncologist should pull the plug on the woman's life support. I know it was her wish to have the life-support turned off after only ten days, but if they kept it on to see if the tumor recessed into nothing, they could potentially learn things that help so many millions of other people. It is unethical to not do what she wanted though since it was in her living-will. This one is a hard question to answer.
C.J.C.
FRHS

2/6/01
I think that they should keep the treatment going because if it could get rid of the tumor completely then you could save tons of lives. Yet if her condition gets worse then they should try to save her life and if that's not possible, then remove the life support and let her go like she said she wanted after 10 days.
K.J.
Fossil Ridge HS

2/6/01
The ethical issues simple, either respecting a women's written wish or finishing medical research that may save 1,000's of lives later on. If this were my decision whether or not to leave this woman on life support I would respect her wishes and take her off life support. Still, with the information and data I have recorded, restarted the experiment on a new willing human.
M.L.
Fossil Ridge High School

2/6/01
I believe that I would keep the woman alive to continue the testing even though it was against her wishes. It could possibly save many lives even though it couldn't save hers.
C.P.
J.J. Pearce High school.

2/6/01
In my opinion I believe that we should continue life support, because even though we lose one life, if the treatment works we would be able to save many lives. Not only that we may even be able to find out if it was the treatment that caused her heart to stop, but after that if she gets better continue the life support if not then cut it.
DN
Mansfield High school

2/6/01
I think that since the patient had a living will you as the doctor should uphold that. Advancements should not be made at the expense of the patient. If the patent indicated the she wanted to be removed from life support after a certain time, then she should be able to do so. Certain patients that want to take part in the study would not sign a living will. As the doctor you should have the knowledge and thankfulness to respect those people's wishes and that of their family.
I think that it is the doctors’ responsibility to honor the patient’s wishes to have life support turned off after 10 days. However the scientific data that would be received is priceless, in my opinion the doctor should contact the family of the patient and explain the situation that they are involved in. Then if given the chance to proceed with treatment, the family would know that they helped hundreds of cancer patients live a happier life.

I think it is only fair to give the dying woman her last "wish." She was obviously prepared to die, and didn't want to stick around being supported by a machine. She was willing to have the treatment done, but I really think that since she was allowing you (me) to experiment with her, that we should take her off life support as a "thank you" for her generosity.

T.A.
Fossil Ridge High School

I think you should do what she wanted you to do in her will. You can already tell that the treatment works effectively, but it kills the patient in the end. Therefore, I think that the doctor should keep on trying to find the treatment that will cure the cancer and keep the person's health well. But, before you do that, I would test the original treatment once more so you can see if it was just that patient that was dying on her own, or if the treatment will kill all the patients in the end.

MH
Lake Highlands Freshmen Center

After ten days on life support, I would honor the patients request to not continue the machines. Medical research for a cure to cancer takes years of experimenting and hundreds of thousands of cancer patients. To keep this lady alive for the start of a long study against her will is wrong, and oncologists can find numerous amounts of patients that are willing to stay alive and sacrifice themselves for scientific research.

J.E.
Lake Highlands Freshmen Center

I totally think that the machines should be turned off. It doesn't matter if the experiment is completed or not it was her wish that she not be kept in a vegetative state. It does not do any good for her even if her cancer is regressing. She will only live by the machines. Not being able to enjoy life or any of the perks there to it. So do as she asks, turn off the machines. You can try the experiment again. Don’t prolong a life that will have no value to it for and experiment that can be done again on other people. People who can tell you how they feel when on the medicine, rather that some that can't.

A.B.
Fossil Ridge H.S.
I believe that you should turn the machine off. Although the regression of the tumor may have been related to the treatment, there is no evidence that something else did not cause it. The patient's last wishes should be respected, as should those of her family. It would be awful for me to see my mother being worked on as if she was some science project when she had requested the machines be turned off. Human beings should never be treated as a case; they should be treated as a person. Although she offered herself to the study, she is still a person, and she still has a family, and their grief would be enough without the added stress of scientists poking and prodding at the person they love. It is unethical to use a person's body for experiments after they are dead. She never consented to have her body used for study, so it should not be. Although the study could lead to a breakthrough, it also proved that if the treatment was the cause, it deteriorated the overall health of a person. She basically gave her life for the experiment, and she should be respected in her death.

A. S.
Fossil Ridge High School

I feel that the right choice in this ethical question has a simple answer. Take the woman off of life support. If the doctor wants to experiment he should do it on a patient that knows what is going on and who wishes experiments to be done on them. Furthermore, if someone is going to blatantly disobey a person's will they should have to same courtesy bestowed upon them. I hope the doctor does take her off of the life support.

A.T.
Mansfield High

If I were treating this patient my overall decision would have to depend on the patient's thoughts, the family's thoughts and what the doctor thinks the best outcome for the patient would be. In this case, since she went into cardiac arrest, I would think that it did not have much to do with the cancer. Even though her tumor regresses her heart and lungs seems like they are deteriorating. I believe that her unconsciousness has nothing to do with the tumor; it has more to do with her cardiac arrest. Her body is tired of holding on, even though the tumor is getting better, she is not. If what she wanted was to be let off the machines after 10 days, I would respect her requests. I would talk to her family and make sure her relatives and children are taken care of. I would let her go unless the doctors knew for sure that they could bring her out of unconsciousness.

D.C.

As a doctor, I believe my first job is to preserve life, no matter what. My patient, the forty-year old woman, agreed to all terms when she consented to the experiment. First of all, I would begin looking for another patient within my care who would agree to take part in the experimental treatment program in the woman's place. If I do not find another patient within a week or the woman does not show adequate improvement, I will turn off the life machines and allow her to die. I realize this seems to disregard her wishes in her living will; but my duty above all else is preserve and protect life.
I would do as the patient ask and take her off the machines after 10 days of being on them. As a doctor, I should respect the patient’s wishes even though I am trying to find a cure for the tumor. There will be other patients willing to help with research that will be in better shape. The lady's family will probably want me to respect their relatives will and I would not want to be sued for malpractice or anything.

M.B.
Dobie High School

We think that you should take her off the machine to further your study as to how to make the medicine work without the serious side effects.

I think you should turn off the machines, because that is what the patient requested. She has her rights; even though she is unconscious she signed a legal document stating her wishes. The experiment could easily be resumed on another patient that is not so far along in stages of the disease.

R.M.
Hudson High School, Lufkin

After being on life support for 10 days, I feel this woman should be taken off because she had made a living will prior to her death that stated her wishes. I cannot understand why there is even a question of what to do because since she had made an advanced directive, it being a living will, it can hold up in court and it seems to me that there is no choice but to follow the patient's wishes if all legal documents are signed and correctly done. Maybe I've gotten wrong information, but I thought having a living will was somewhat like a DNR- no matter what the situation is, even if her family wants her to stay on life support, the patient's wishes must be followed. Again, I think this woman should be taken off life support after 10 days if she had made a living will prior to death. To me this case is more about legal responsibilities- not ethics.

K.M.

I believe that the doctor should take the woman off of the life support because that is what the woman had in her will. If the doctor kept her on the life support to see how the cancer growth was decreasing it would be very selfish and it would be abusing the patients’ rights. The doctor already had evidence that the tumor was decreasing in size and if the woman wanted to be taken off the life support that is her choice.

L.C.
Lake Highlands Freshman Center
2/4/01

I feel that I have an obligation to follow my patient's will. If the new treatment seems to have a positive effect on the tumor, then I can tell this result to other patients. The positive results of the treatment will probably influence more people to test the drug. However, I feel that the proper action should be to follow the will of the patient even if it means allowing him/her to die.

T.M. Pearce High School

2/4/01

There's no doubt in my mind that the woman's wishes should be carried out after ten days. The researcher could perform an autopsy and see why her health began to deteriorate and hopefully solve the problem. He or she already knows that the new treatment works, they just have to pull out a few kinks and then they can experiment on other patients. Although it would be a great medical breakthrough, making someone suffer and become even sicker is wrong. You could still help others by simply sticking with it until you find the treatment that works.

Mansfield High School

2/4/01

I think that I would take her off of life support because that is what she asked for. I would find another patient to test this on, one that is willing to stay on life support if he gets that ill. Then I could see if the cancer went away, and also see if he recovers. But the lady asked to be taken off life support, so I would do as she requested.

J
Fossil Ridge High School

2/4/01

In this case, the legal thing to do would be to turn off the life support machine, however just because something is legal, that does not necessarily mean that it is moral. The moral thing to do would be to keep the patient alive and study the effects of the treatment on cancer. This way, the doctor has the potential to save many more lives, and the patient who wanted the machine turned off will get that once the study of the treatment is complete, it is only a matter of time. If having one person wait for a longer period of time could potentially save thousands of lives, that is the only ethical thing to do.

D.R.
Garland High School

2/4/01

There is no question in my mind that the woman's life support should be turned off. It's her life, and if she wished for it to end after 10 days of life support, then that's what should happen. She knew going into the trial that her progress would be used for research and did not stipulate in her will that she would then wish to be kept on the machines. I could perform another trial on another cancer patient, and at this point, it should be easier to convince another person that the trial would be beneficial with the partial results gathered from the first woman. A person's will should be respected under any and every condition.

K.S.
Garland High School
2/4/01
My opinion is that you should turn off the life-support because that was the women’s wishes. If I were her in the hospital and wrote my will saying I would want the machines turned off I would want them turned off. It was stated that this was a common form of cancer and if that is true then the scientific community should have no trouble finding someone else to attempt the treatment. So to summarize the machines should be turned off b/c that is what was wanted by the patient.

L.T.
Lake Highland Freshman Center

2/4/01
Personally, I would not go against my patients wishes. But this case is different. The decision is not whether it is morally right to keep the patient alive for the sake of science. This decision is between whether the patient would have, based on her own experience, wanted to stay alive for the possibility of saving future generations, or if she would have wanted her "living will" to be upheld. Pragmatically, it would not be my decision as to either. The "living will" would be almost impossible to get around in real-life. In this case, the decision ought to be up to the family of the patient or close friends. If none are living or capable, I would be the one to decide. Due to the fact that I do not clearly know my patients wishes, I would decide to turn-off the life support machine and try to find another patient willing to try the experiment.

J.L.
Fossil Ridge High School, Fort Worth, TX

2/4/01
The case set before the oncologist is very controversial. But if it were not, it would not be questioned for an ethical review. The ethical issues involved are based around the principle of what the individual wants or the future of mankind. Because the issues can be filtered into these two sides, it is obvious (no matter what the religious background) that the future of mankind is much more important than respecting the wishes of a person who is already in essence gone. If the patient wanted to die with their wishes intact to receive a proper burial, then she would have never agreed to go through with the experimental treatment. There were two reasons for this original choice, first to help herself to maybe live a longer life and second to help mankind. By allowing testing to happen on her, she was making an attempt to help future generations so that maybe they might be immune to the same cancer that was killing her. Because dying for the purpose of saving future generations is extremely respected and utterly selfless, keeping her alive for this reason restores the dignity, honor, and respect that goes along with this path to death. Yes, her original wishes and "living will" are not being honored, but what this information and testing could give to everyone is almost incomprehensible and this would most likely be something that the patient would want. And if the patient would not have wanted this, it should not matter because that only means that the patient was extremely selfish and should not even be given a second thought. This may sound harsh but it is for a good cause and it is not necessarily the best thing to say but it is not like it is hurting her any. If she were suffering or something along the lines of her life and quality of life being directly affected by this, I would not be defending this side of the argument and it would really surprise me to learn that the patient would not agree with me. The bottom line is at this point in the patient's life, it comes to the question of whether or not her requests should be upheld if there is a chance that the future lives might be saved. It is obvious when you weigh the weight of one person's requests or the uncountable number of lives that have the potential to be spared.
T.M.
Garland High School

2/4/01
This moral dilemma reaches far beyond the scope of one person dying of cancer. This treatment may save "many lives" if it is proven successful. This woman will probably die anyway but her reaction to this new cancer drug is essential to the overall study. Extend the length of time she remains unconscious to about twenty days, then remove her from the life support. Needless to say if a family member [husband or parent] objects you must follow the law and "pull the plug"---interesting dilemma

R.E.C.
Seagoville High School

2/3/01
I think that I would follow my patients request and turn off the machines. It is her life to keep or give away. It wouldn't be my decision.

N.L.
Lake Highland Freshman Center

2/3/01
I think that I would keep the experiment going. If my patient had agreed to help me, her, and others by taking the experimental treatment, she would still like for others to get the help even if she doesn't make it. If she cared that much in the first place, she'd still want to help save lives. But, as soon as I got the info that I needed, then her other wishes would go through.

A.S.
Lake Highland Freshman Center

2/2/01
The patient specifically requests a written "living will" expressing her desire to discontinue life support after ten days. We must all show considerations for her decision, even at the expense of not being able to complete the experimental therapy. There are several other cancer patients out there who are willing to try new treatments. Why not use them and respect the wish of a dying woman?

H.P.
Sam Houston HS

2/2/01
If I were that oncologist, I would respect my patient' request and turn off the machines after ten days. If the patient doesn't want to suffer any more than she has already, why should I force her to do so by disregarding her request? As far as I can see it, I won't be getting in any trouble with the police if her request is in a contract signed by the both of us. I would also inform her family days ahead to see if they are against the contract. What's the point of trying to see if the tumor will shrivel away if the patient isn't even up to the celebration of the cure of cancer?

A.P.
Lake Highland Freshman Center (RISD)
I believe that in this case you should bring in the family and discuss the situation with them, and understand their perspectives on the situation (from the doctors perspective), and if they say keep her alive to do the experimental work on her progress on cancer then do it. Though if the family abides by what she asked to be done then take her off the machines. Though I would also explain to them that the chances of survival and the chance of if we kept her alive on the machines and continued the progress of this experiment, how it could make a medical breakthrough and how we would then have a cure for that type of cancer.

B.G.
Lake Highlands Freshman Center /RISD

I believe that if it is the ladies wishes that she be taken off of life support you do it. You may be searching for a scientific cure for a cancer but you should not put the lady through unwanted possibilities if it is her wish. People have brains and a conscience if they want something that is there life to happen then that is their choice.

Lake Highlands Freshman Center

I think that the life-supporting machines should be turned off by the request of the woman. The tumor might keep getting smaller and maybe even completely go away, but since the woman asked that the life support be turned off, it should be turned off. If her request is not granted, then we question the ethics of the care givers.

L.C.
Lake Highlands Freshman Center/RISD

I think that you should not turn off the machine. The woman made her decision before she knew what would happen. She did not know that the treatment was working, and that she could save many lives. She agreed to try the new treatment, and she should finish what she started in the name of science.

EMD
Lake Highlands Freshman Center

I think there are a few choices in the situation. The doctor can continue life-support to try out the experimental therapy, but the doctor can also respect the will of the patient and stop all life support now that the ten days is up. I would first of all consult with the family of the patient. I think it would be vital to inform them of the choices for this situation. The patient's family might want to stop the machines as the patient has wished, or the family might allow the doctor to try the new therapy, even though it might not work. I believe that the outcome should be decided by the patient's family. I'm not a doctor, but I think that would be the professional thing to do.

C.F.
Lake Highlands Freshman Center
2/2/01

I think that the women should decide whether she will be taken off life support rather than the doctor. If the woman was ready to die she shouldn't be forced to live in a state of no feeling.

T.A.
Lake Highlands Freshman Center-RISD

2/2/01

In regard to the case in which I have just read I have a few statements to bring forward to you. In my opinion, I think that the machines should be turned off as the women as requested in her living will and I would like to give a few reasons in which the process should occur. First, it is against the law for doctors to go against this women's request in her living will in which she had written before she had undergone various disabilities due to cancer. Second, it is the women's right to have the choice to keep on living or to let time due what it is supposed to do, in other words let go from her life. It should not be a doctor's choice whether or not she should live or die. I would bet that if a relative of a doctor was in the same position in which this women in the case is in, and the doctor's relative had requested to have the machined turned off, the doctor in which is related to this person would turn off the machines in a heartbeat. To close my argument, I would just like to say that I think that it would be wrong to go against what this woman in that case has requested.

E.D.
Lake Highlands Freshman Center

2/2/01

I believe that you should continue to keep her on the life support machine to conduct further studies on her tumor. I believe that she would want for you to use this research that she has volunteered for, to help other people from having to go through the pain that she did. It says that her type of cancer was very common and therefore the research that you would complete would help save many lives. Although she said that she wanted the machine turned off after ten days, I believe that under these certain circumstances she would want for the research that she gave her life for to have a purpose and help make a better world. If you pulled the plug the research that she gave her life for would be a waste. Help this woman's self-sacrifice for science be a one that is remembered not one that was killed at a moment so short to glory.

T.C.
Lake Highlands Freshman Center

2/1/01

I believe it is morally wrong to keep the soul trapped in a useless earthly body when its time is obviously come; it is against nature. But more than that, the person specifically requested that she not stay alive with the aid of machines past ten days. As for the curiosity of science, there will always be more people willing to undergo an experiment that could contribute in saving others' and possibly even their own life. Thanks for the opportunity to let me post my opinion.

Lake Highlands Freshman Center

2/1/01

I believe that the doctors and scientist should go against the patients will and watch what the cancer does. The reasons for this are that the women might die, but she could have also saved a bunch of other people's lives. The medicine might even have been a miracle cure for cancer.
The ethical issues involved in this situation are: should the doctor follow the wishes of the patient, should the doctor continue to follow up on his experiment to save other patients, and should the doctor respect the rights of an individual to the determent of possibly not save millions.

The patient stated in her will for all machines to be turned off after ten days if she was unconscious and required life support. I would honor her wishes and turn off the life support machines, allowing her to die. Even though scientific advances could be made from the results of the experimental therapy, I think it would be more important to do what the patient wanted. If she did not want to remain unconscious and on life support for a long time before dying, she should not be used for experimental therapy. Plus, if it looked as if the therapy was working on her and she had a common form of cancer, other patients would probably be willing to try the therapy.

As much as it would hurt me to do so, I would stop the woman's life support. Although, it would be a great advancement in the medical field, I felt that the woman's desires must be respected for and carried out.
2/1/01

My opinion is that the patient's living will should be honored. If I were in the patient in this situation then I would want my wishes to be carried out. I can see the doctor's point of view. In this case the treatment appeared to work. The doctor can always treat another patient with cancer to see if the same results would occur. I think it would be morally wrong with keeping the patient live just to see if the treatment cured the cancer. If the doctor has the treatment recorded then it wouldn't be hard to try the treatment on another patient with their say so.

J.L.
Lake Highlands Freshman Center (RISD)

2/1/01

I would pull all the machines off. The lady very clearly stated her wishes if something like this should happen. I wouldn't worry about science if she had told me that she would like to die.

Lake Highlands Freshmen Center

2/1/01

The main ethical issue being addressed in this situation is whether to go against the woman's wishes for the sake of research, or to do as she asked. In my opinion, there is no contest between the two: I believe that the woman's wishes should be followed, and she should be disconnected from life support. She did not write in her living will, "Remove me from life support UNLESS the treatment works." To be living solely on the life support means she has become a vegetable, and the person is no longer there, only a body. Her body should not be tested on, and I believe that her wishes should be followed; to not do so would be violating her rights.

L.N.
Lake Highlands Freshman Center / RISD

2/1/01

Ok in this case I believe in every different point of view and very many questions come to mind. But I'm just going to go with a broad answer so here it goes:

I believe that first u should talk to a family member but then u think of course they're going to go with her wishes but if u think in her point of view when she signed that "living will" she probably thought she was A. not going to make it or B. not going to go into a comma. Its cancer not some kind of leukemia or whatever would make u go into a comma. I mean she probably had so much on her mind that she wasn't thinking about every step of her treatment she was probably thinking "wow this is a common cancer and very fatal I don't know if I'm going to make it, what I say to this person and what am I going to do with this act..."

I believe the majority population of this world has lost a lot of faith getting caught up with every new thing in the world (money, power, and businesses) and unless she is one of those people that make everything in her life count I don't think she thought thoroughly about the living will. So what I'm trying to get at is yes she did say she wanted to be put off the machine but if she stayed and finished with the experiment think how many lives she could save. I man maybe this treatment could save 50% of people who's diagnosed with cancer. And what IF, (there is always an if) she came back I mean it's only TEN days it's not like it's been a year. I think if she did continue with the treatment and ended beating cancer and she did end up dying she could have
some closure thinking "god I saved a lot of people " no one unless you're that shallow will die and think "they went against my wishes I would sue them if I were alive" that person would be narrow minded not being able to see what they did. And also if it were me I would choose keeping up the experiment because if I had fought off cancer but died of an effect of cardiac arrest I would die happy thinking I won the war . Not very many people can survive cancer so I would rather survive cancer and then dying of another cause then dying of cancer itself.

M.K.
Lake Highlands Freshman Center

In the physician's situation, there are a couple of logical and ethical questions to ask. First, was the "living will" written in the State of Texas? If the answer is yes to this question, then the decision is most definitely to keep the treatment going. According to Texas state law, a person must be completely brain dead to cut life support, and even then, it is the decision of the physician and the listed proxy (wife, husband, etc.). Next, the physician must ask himself if the treatment will most definitely save his patient's life. According to the given information, it seems that the treatment, while destroying the tumor, was causing her overall health to deteriorate. If this fact could be proven, then by all means the doctor should cut the life support. In the terms of ethical decisions, I believe that the doctor needs to look at the problem from his perspective. If cutting the life support is the doctor's logical and ethical answer to solving the problem at hand, then that is what he should do, since he is the best qualified person to make the judgment call. If however by the doctor's perspective, he feels that the best logical and ethical solution to the problem is to continue treatment, since the person is still alive, then by his interpretation the patient should live and continue treatment. From my point of view, I believe that the patient should live and treatment should continue, simply because it seemed that overall the treatment was beginning to help the patient.

B.B.
Lake Highland Freshman Center (RISD)

I think that, even though she wants to die, I think that since this is an experimental testing period, the lady should continue through these tests until no further results are drawn. Then, after a while of stable, steady conditions, she should be allowed to die peacefully in the hospital, after all, she did allow the doctors to basically use her for the world's benefit, the least we can do is grant her last wish.

D.R.
Lake Highlands Freshman Center/ RISD

The doctor should let the lady die. She specifically said that she should die if she was not okay after ten days. The doctor is obligated to do as the patient wishes. Another patient can be found for the experiment.

One of the ethical things in doing this would be that the woman had made a decision to, if on life support be taken off after ten days. Now that the ten days have passed, because of her will, she should be taken off of life support, but a scientist may decide against the woman's will and keep her alive for the sake of science and medicine. the main problem with this is that someone is
taking away that woman’s right to follow through with what she has already decided earlier in her life; however, the pro towards this is that if the woman were kept alive and the tumor disappeared then thousands of lives could be saved. Therefore this is a dilemma of two ethics, respecting ones decisions or doing one thing wrong to save the lives of thousands.

G. C.
Lake Highlands Freshman Center

2/1/01

My thoughts on this subject are as follows. This is a really tough issue because of the many factors involved. I really don't know what I would do because the woman specifically said that she wanted to be taken off of all life support but she's only 40 and could still have many years ahead of her. But she did write a "life will." Then there's that little issue of the lives you could save from the information you would gather from her sickness. I'll bet that if she could talk she would tell you that she wanted to help those other people who could benefit. I guess that I would keep her alive until the experiment was complete, although it sounds evil. I'm not saying that I would be ignoring her will but that I was helping many others because of her sacrifice. Since she is going to probably die anyway don't you think that she would want to help as many others as possible before she did so?

E.B.
Lake Highlands Freshman Center

2/1/01

While there is no doubt that this is a controversial matter and can be argued either way, I strongly believe that the wishes of the patient must be honored. When the patient entered the hospital, she was fully conscious and could make her own decisions. One of these decisions was to make a "living will," and now that she is unconscious, that decision cannot be reversed. In my opinion, not following through with the wishes of the patient and, instead, observing results of the treatment would be taking advantage of both the situation and the patient. There are a number of ethical issues involved in this case. First of all, the patient had a request and this should be honored. Secondly, doing otherwise would be taking advantage of him/her. However, many lives could be saved if the patient was kept alive, and the treatment was in fact a success.

J.W.
Lake Highlands Freshman Center

2/1/01

My response to the February-March case is a rather simple one. The main argument would be that she signed a "living will" just as she entered the hospital. This means that she was aware of the situation that she was involved in and the effects her decision could have. The most obvious answer would be to cut the machines after ten days. The situation might have been different if she had signed an agreement prior to entering the hospital or participating in the experiment. The oncologist may have had an argument in that situation but, otherwise there is no choice but to pull the plug on the patient.

To answer the ethical issue question more directly, some of the main issues that I see goes as follows: 1) the patients’ rights 2) the doctors study 3) the families rights (if present) 4) the public’s rights (the treatment that could be created from this study). I believe the main ethical issue would be the patients’ rights as I had said before since the patient was aware of her
situation as she entered the hospital. So my main concern would be for the patient and the public (the treatment).

RWM
Lake Highlands Freshman Center

2/1/01

I think that you should respect the patient's wishes and turn off the machines. There is no excuse for keeping a person from what they truly want. Also, I don't believe in keeping someone alive against their wishes just so the medical community can have a human "lab-rat"! That is stupid on the part of the doctors who want to keep the woman alive! If they want to test the drug, find a person who is willing to stay alive for as long as the drug takes to work! Do not use someone who has already told you to turn off all life-support after so many days!

A.C.
Lake Highlands Freshman Center

2/1/01

I have read the situation over carefully about the 40 year old woman one machine life support. I know that I would take her off the life support because that is what she wants to do. People that are on machine operated life support, then they are dead because they are letting a machine live their life. She knew that she wasn't going to get any better; in fact her condition could get worse, so she probably doesn't want to take the chance of having her condition worsen. I say by all means let her have what she wants. If she doesn't want the life support then take it away from her, because that was her choice and how she's wants her life to end.

Lake Highlands Freshman Center

2/1/01

I would let the patient go without life support because it is her choice, and I think that the patient should be able to decide what the doctors do to her.

Lake Highlands in RISD

2/1/01

There are many, many possible answers to this question, but the most logical one, in my opinion, is keeping the woman on life support to see if the tumor continues to regress. First of all, if I were the one that all cancer victims were waiting on to see if there were a cure, I would definitely want to stay on life support so that the cure could be found. Second, I wouldn't be able to feel any pain or anything like that, so why not use my body as an experiment. As long as it is for a great cause, I'd be all for it. And lastly, the one main reason would be so that I could help out those w/ cancer because I would have known what it would be like to be a cancer victim, and whatever is possible to help them should be done.

A.N.G.
Lake Highlands Freshman Center/RISD

2/1/01

It think it would be morally and ethically wrong to leave her on the life supporting machines because she said that after ten days that she wants them turned off. Even if it is for science it was her wish for them to have the machines turned off. The only way it might even be okay is if her children or husband said to leave it on so that she can get better.
M.R.
Lake Highlands FC

2/1/01

I believe that the doctor should make calls to her family members and ask if they have a will on
the suggestion, like doctors normally do. If there is none, the doctor should obey her patients
request and turn the machine off. Plus he has to obey medical law with any action he takes.

C.P.
Lake Highlands Freshman Center

2/1/01

This situation is a very tough one. I believe that God has a plan for us and in that plan includes
when we die. This woman isn't really alive the machines are forcing her to just keep breathing. I
think that the doctor should let the woman's family decide what to do. They may want to keep
her there in case of the chance that she one day wakes up. Even though that would probably
put them through a lot of pain and suffering knowing that she'll won't be able to respond to
them. If they decide to let her go then they should do that. It was this woman's wishes to be
unplugged after 10 of unconsciousness then they should consider that. Then again its other
peoples wishes to take their life ever when there healthy by cutting their wrist or jumping off a
building. If the family can't make a decision then I think the doctor should just let the woman
stay as she is, because it is too hard of a decision for just the doctor to make.

B.B.
Lake Highlands Freshmen Center (RISD)

2/1/01

This is a tough question with many different thoughts on the subject. I am a Christian, though I
would make a mistake without God's counseling. Praying would be the key in this picture. I think
to make the right decision, which there could be many, would be very difficult. The most
probable thing to happen is probably to wait a few more days to see if the woman might become
conscious again. I would definitely think to respect her will, but I think that is another thing to
worry us. If the lady wakes up within a few days, I would ask her rethink her decision if she
would become unconscious again. Now, if she wishes to still be taken off the mechanical
machines, I would respect her wishes, and most likely do that. I don't think I should be the one
to actually "kill" her, and I say "kill" because this would be going against God's will, for I do not
want to be the cause of her death. I thank you for listening to my suggestion, and I hope that I
may only have a good solution, and not the best, for there are many out there that I could not be
able to think of, which would include better moral issues and a better situation for the woman
and doctors to be in.

M.B.
Lake Highlands Freshman Center

2/1/01

I have just read the "Interactive Ethics Case for February-March 2001" dilemma. I feel that the
woman pleading to be killed is not the "right path" she should take. Being a non-denominational
Christian, I believe that to commit a suicide is wrong. In the long run, she will be saving and
freeing people of this cancer. If she were a Christian, she would understand that her pain and
suffering will not be in vain but rewarded in the end. I received a poem about a young girl with
cancer from one of my friends. She E-mailed me and asked me what I thought. I concluded that
I should be living my life to the fullest. And I pray and thank the Lord for everything he has blessed me with.

I believe that the woman should cherish your life and not only think of herself but for others as well.

T.V. Lake Highlands Freshman Center

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2/1/01

I think that there is obviously some other unknown problem with her and if her tumor is continuing to deteriorate then there is hope. She may want to turn off the machine but there must be a reason for her to still be alive. Maybe her sickness is a reactant from her body from the experiment. I think everyone should keep hope and sometimes in order to save lives you gotta take risks.

B. P.
Lake Highlands Freshman Center/RISD

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2/1/01

If I was the oncologist in this very significant situation, I would definitely respect the woman's wishes in her "living-will." Turning off the life supporting machines and allowing her to go to heaven at her destined time are the most reasonable and ethical things to do. Just because the woman is unconscious, it doesn't mean that you can disregard her wishes. This is because to me, that's almost like committing a crime. However, there is still hope. I would just find another willing volunteer who would want to be my second subject for my new experimental treatment program. Remember, hope doesn't come to you because you have to find hope yourself in some situations. I really believe that this experiment will be very successful and will eventually save countless number of precious lives because many people have tumors. The future is in the oncologist's hands.

R.
Lake Highlands Freshman Center/RISD

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2/1/01

I believe the doctors should talk to the women's family and they should say, "we could take her off life support and let her die, or keep her on the machines and possibly using her life to save many others." Leaving her death to bring life to others. It disagrees to the patients will but if the doctors get a legal "ok" I think they should do it.

S.S.
Lake Highlands Freshmen Center, Honors Biology

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2/1/01

I think that there are two sides to this issue. The woman asked that she be taken off life support after ten days, and that is her will because that is what she asked then it should be followed through with. The other side of this is that she also agreed to have the cancer treatment performed on her, and if they keep her on life support they will be able to finish that treatment and their studies causing her to follow through on her promise. So if they chose either it would be going against something that was promised. So I think that the ethics involved here are follow through with the promise that the doctors made to follow her will or to follow through with the woman's promise to take the treatment. I think that because this woman is the patient it is the doctor's job to follow through what the patient would have wanted and I think that they...
should take her off life support and try to find someone else who is willing to take the cancer
treatment so that the doctors can continue their study.
Lake Highlands Freshman Center

2/1/01

In response to your Interactive Case for February-March 2001, what I would do if I were the
oncologist is take the lady off the life-support and let her die, because it is what she stated in her
will. To continue letting her be alive after the 10 days just to see if the tumor kept on regressing
would be against what she desired. The oncologist can always try again on another patient and
see if the same reactions occurred-the cardiac arrest-or if it was just part of the lady's life. But
no, I would definitely take her off life-support after the 10 days had been complete.

A.N.
Lake Highlands Freshman Center

2/1/01

I believe that the woman's will should be honored, and the machines turned off. I believe this
because, well who is a doctor to say who has the right to live and who does not. The woman's
will should supersede any decisions made by the doctor. While I see the controversy in the
discussion, this form of cancer was said to be very common. So why couldn't the doctors merely
find another patient in which to test the new experiment on?

Furthermore, if the experimental treatment was the cause of the woman's heart attack, I believe
that experiment should be discontinued and reevaluated to determine another form of treatment.

C.J. 11th Grade
Garland High School

2/1/01

If the doctors decided to keep the woman on life support, the dying woman's wishes would not
be carried out. Yet if the doctors let the woman die as she wanted to, they might be wasting
many other cancer patients' lives. I think that I would let take the woman off of life support
because her participation in the research program was voluntary, and because she deserves to
die in peace. Sadly, there will always be other cancer patients that will be willing to try the new
drug.

EMS
Lake Highlands Freshman Center

2/1/01

I think the fate of this lady should be what she wrote in her will, it's her wants, not the medical
officials’.

LHFC- 9th

2/1/01

I think that the life-support machine should be turned off. It was the patient's decision and she
would not have signed the living will if that is not how she wanted to turn out. The ethical issues
involved are that she agreed to be a part of an important advancement in this doctor's research
and by turning off the machines, the experiment would be ruined. But, the woman signed a
document saying what she really wants!

CB
Lake Highlands Freshmen Center/RISD

2/1/01
I believe that the person being treated should decide what they want to do. After they know what
happens they should make the decision. The only thing about this that might be unethical is you
deciding for her. The only logical thing to do in this case is to follow her will but wait and give her
a little extra time.

LHFC

2/1/01
I believe that you should take her off of life support because that is what she requested and you
put her there in the first place.

E.A.
Lake Highlands Freshman Center/ RISD

2/1/01
I think that the doctor should turn off all of the life support machines because that was the will of
the patient. If the doctor asked the patients permission to still conduct the experiment after her
death, that would be different; the patient strictly said that she wanted all of her life support
machines to be turned off after ten days. The doctor will probably have other patients that want
to participate with his experiment. Maybe next time he will think of all possible outcomes and
ask the patient's permission to continue the experiments if there are any complications with the
procedure that would cause the patient to die. Maybe this also is a clue to the doctor that his
medicine might destroy the tumor, but also could destroy the patient.

B.
Lake Highlands Freshman Center

2/1/01
In my opinion, honestly I would have to keep her on these machines and enable the process to
continue on through as normal because if the treatment program actually works, then you will
have now a cure to save many people. Honoring her will, and cutting off all of the machines
supporting her, would not prove anything, which in future time, just might kill others because I
had no idea if the treatment worked or not. My opinion in this situation, would be the hero, and
pay no attention to her will, and in time, save many lives because I proved my treatment
program to work.

M.D. / 9th
Lake Highlands Freshman Center

2/1/01
I believe that since the woman prepared a living will to have all machines shut off after 10 days
that her will should be followed and she should be allowed to die. The doctors should not go
against what she wants, even for the experiment. There will be other people willing to become
subjects in the program.
M.K.B.
Lake Highlands Freshmen Center, RISD

2/1/01
I believe that the doctor should follow what she wanted in her "living-will". Also the treatment is probably not that good since it shrank her tumor but caused her to get sicker.

M.S.
Lake Highlands Freshman Center-RISD

2/1/01
I believe that the doctor should turn the life supporting machines off because it was her last wish. Why should something that she wants to happen in life happen and when she did not happen? She didn't give the doctor permission to supersede this rule and therefore is violating the rights of her and her family. I think the doctor should turn the life machines off.

A.H.
Lake Highlands Freshmen Center

2/1/01
I think that the oncologist should let the woman die like she would have wanted and that she put in her will. She took a risk trying the experiment, the least the oncologist can do is fulfill the woman's wish and will to be put to rest after ten days. Yes, if she lives he may save other lives, however, what about her wishes and will to die? She is being put on life support and personally if I was in the same situation I would not want to be considered an experiment and that was the only reason I was living. Also what if the experiment does not work, then how would the oncologist feel about that? I would let her be put to rest like she wished and asked for.

J.B.
Lake Highlands Freshman Center

2/1/01
This is a hard question to answer, but I would discontinue the use of the machines and let the woman die. In her living will it said to let her die 10 days after she was unconscious and living off of machines. I believe it is unethical to violate a person's will without giving the person a chance to change it. She cannot change the will because she is unconscious, therefore I would do as she wished. There will be many other people that are willing to try new tests. Maybe the doctor should ask him/her if he/she is willing to be sustained and see if the tumor decreases to nothing and ask them in advance, before they pass out and are in a coma state. To me, they would be giving their living body to science, and that is a good cause.

B.B.
Lake Highlands Freshmen Center

2/1/01
I believe that the woman's life support machines should be turned off. It was her decision to be the first in the experiment just as it was her choice as to when to pull the plug. Her decision was to die after ten days, when to die is no one's decision but the bearer. It would be a crime against humanity to not honor her decision after she has most graciously offered to help you by possibly giving her life to your experimentation. This is a question of the ethics of the situation. If the question was of the gain of scientific knowledge then my view would be much different. However it is not and this is what I believe to be true.
2/1/01

I feel that the ethical thing to do would be to continue the regression of the tumor because the treatment was taking noticeable effect, and was saving the woman's life. Though her health was becoming worse, her tumor was getting smaller so in fact when it became totally gone, her health might possible gotten better. The doctor in my opinion would be ethical to continue treatment if it is beneficial and is saving the woman's life.

CEM Lake Highlands Freshman Center/RISD

2/1/01

Here is my personal opinion on the case; I plan on being a doctor when I am an adult, so this case is interesting to me. I believe that since the woman is in a coma and being kept alive by life support and has no opinion in the matter, the next person (or people) would be her family to ask. If they grant permission for her to be kept alive for the study of Science against her will, then let it be that way and continue the study. BUT if they do not get permission from the family first before keeping her alive for any longer, the doctors could end up with a few very serious court cases and much money loss.

Thank you,

S.J.

Lake Highlands Freshman Center

2/1/01

I believe that if that is what this lady wrote to do, then do it. But, if she said this because of the tumor and cardiac arrest was because of another reason, then by all means "No". This is her life and she probably thought that this cancer will kill her. If she is in no pain and can make it through this and then let her live. My father had cancer himself and I thought in many cases that he would not make it because all of our leads said that this tumor was Containing cancer. After my dad her he was devastated, especially since a close family friend just died because of this awful attacker.

E

Lake Highlands Freshman Center/ RISD

2/1/01

I feel that the issues involved are what the patient wants, and if the doctors are willing to risk their careers to better themselves at the expense of a suffering cancer patient.

M.B.

Lake Highlands Freshman Center- RISD

2/1/01

I would follow the old woman's will, because she wanted that way. The only person, who should choose whether a person should be taken off life support, is the person himself. So that's my view on this case.

J.C.

Lake Highlands Freshmen Center RISD
2/1/01
Although the decision would be a very difficult one to make, I would most likely leave machines on to see if the treatment would destroy the cancer. I do believe that the woman's wishes should be followed; but in this case, there was no way she could have known this would happen. I would also use my prior knowledge of her personality. Was she the kind of person who would want to help save the lives of many others? Talking to her family would also be a strong factor in helping me decide. I would make sure it was known how much the continuing of her treatment would help the medical field. In the end, hopefully, I would be permitted to leave the machines running, but only long enough to fulfill the treatment.

E.M.
Lake Highlands Freshman Center/ RISD

2/1/01
In my opinion, I think that the doctors should notify any close family members about the decision and ask to allow the life supporting machines to continue to keep her alive long enough that the experiment can be completed. If the family members do not wish to continue the experiment then the patient should be taken off life support. However, if the family agrees, then the doctors could learn from the results of the experiment along with a chance that the patient may regain consciousness and may be brought back to health.

2/1/01
This particular ethics issue is somewhat two-sided. It would be very beneficial to the medical world if someone found a "cure" for cancer. However, I believe the patient's wishes are first and foremost in the area of importance. If she was informed of the possibility of this situation, she could have altered her will accordingly. But since this is not the case, the doctor is obligated to fulfill her desire.

G.H.
Lake Highlands Freshman Center

2/1/01
I believe you should turn the machines off. That was her wish. You can always try the treatment on someone else

B.

2/1/01
I am writing you on the subject of the February-March Ethics issue! I feel that the women should be taken off life support. If the cancer treatment has already deteriorated the women's life, she should be allowed to have her last wish and die. It is not the doctor's decision whether or not she lives or dies.

C.F.S.
Lake Highlands Freshman Center

2/1/01
If it's been ten days or well. She changed the will when she said that she would do the experimental procedure. Although she didn't change it in the will she gave you her consent to perform the procedure and you haven't finished the experiment yet. Plus if you could see how well the procedure worked she could save so many more people. And who cares if she gets
mad that’s selfish if she does plus you just saved her life she should be thanking you. If you got sued you are a cancer doctor your very very rich you can afford a lawyer I doubt shed win the case anyway cause the judge would see how important you decision was is.

B.R.
Lake Highlands Freshman Center

2/1/01
I think that the relatives of the patient should be consulted prior to making a decision. The note was most likely written in a panic and the patient might not have been thinking clearly at the time. If no living relatives can be found, then the patient’s last wishes should be followed.

D.T.
Lake Highlands FC

2/1/01
In my opinion you should take her off the life support because a will can be likened to somebody’s dying request. The experiment can always be tried again but she made her own will which I am sure she assumed would be carried out should it be need to. In my opinion not doing what she asked is the same as not following out the inheritance that somebody put in their will. So, to me the answer is simple do what the will says.

PB

2/1/01
I think that you should not take her off, because even though she wanted to be taken off life support, she could actually show that there is a cancer treatment that could work.

Lake Highlands Freshman Center (RISD)