

INTERACTIVE ETHICS CASE FOR OCTOBER-DECEMBER 2008
Posted Comments: 11/17/08 –11/25/08

Background Information:

Anorexia nervosa is a serious medical problem that can be fatal. A person with anorexia has an intense fear of gaining weight. Someone with anorexia thinks about food and limits the food he or she eats, even though she or he is too thin. They develop a distorted perception of the size or shape of his or her body. Anorexia is more than just being too thin. It is a way of using food or starving oneself to feel more in control of life, and to ease tension, anger, and anxiety. Persons with anorexia may use extreme measures to lose weight, including making oneself throw up, using diet pills, using laxatives, and excessive exercise. As anorexia progresses, it affects the brain, heart, muscles, joints, and bones, kidneys, intestines, hormones, hair, and skin. Anorexia can hurt a baby when the mother is pregnant. Women who have anorexia while they are pregnant are more likely to lose the baby. If a woman with anorexia does not lose the baby, she is more likely to have the baby early, deliver by C-section, and have depression after the baby is born. For more information, see <http://www.4woman.gov/>

Ethics Case:

Sheryl is a 24-year-old, pregnant, single, white female, who was referred by her obstetrician for evaluation. Prior to her pregnancy she met criteria for binge eating disorder, but since pregnancy she is restricting and purging her meals, as well as abusing over-the-counter diet pills and laxatives. Even though she has lost weight during her pregnancy, she is upset that she is getting "fat" with it, and thus avoiding intake of food. She weighs 169 pounds and stands 5'4". At the onset of her pregnancy she weighed 199 pounds, and has lost 30 pounds in the first 28 weeks of her pregnancy. The patient's boyfriend is excited about the pregnancy. However, he voices disdain for psychiatric care, and refuses to be involved with her treatment in any way. Her parents are excited about the pregnancy, but they are concerned about the health of the baby. They want her to come back and live with them so they can monitor herself care and make sure she is following her doctor's orders. She is refusing a higher level of care and she is not even fully compliant with treatment at this level of care. For example, she follows only 80% of her meal plan, and takes diet pills and laxatives on the weekends.

This case raises a number of questions about a woman's freedom of choice, complicated by carrying a baby who is at risk because of the woman's anorexia nervosa and subsequent refusal to eat. How would you respond if you were her physician? Would you do nothing and leave it to her to decide what to do? Would you offer her outpatient treatment, including education and counseling? Would you suggest that she go into the hospital? Would you take steps to hospitalize her under a court order?

Is it ethical to discharge her for not following treatment recommendations?

Does this situation warrant involuntary treatment in a psychiatric hospital?

Student Responses

11.25.08

If I were Sheryl's physician, I would take steps to obtain a court order to put her into a psychiatric hospital and make sure she eats well for the health of her baby. This would ensure the health of the unborn child until Sheryl's child is born. I'm stating this because Sheryl might try to alter her baby's diet because Sheryl thinks that the baby is too fat. If that becomes a problem, then it would be a lot easier to take the child away from the mother in that case, rather than controlling her for the sake of the inborn child.

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Having an anorexic pregnant woman is a very tedious case, because some will definitely argue about Sheryl's freedom of choice in the matter of whether or not she eats and whether or not she is in control of her appearance. My response to these arguments would be to bring up the baby and ask who is fighting for the unborn child whose mother's decisions during her pregnancy can permanently damage this child in any form or fashion.

J.W. – Aubrey H.S. Anatomy & Physiology

11.24.08

I would try to get her help, because she needs more as it is. I would offer her personal treatment or tell her to go to a hospital, but it she would decide if she wants help or not. I would recommend it, for her safety and the child's safety. I would not make her do anything that she was uncomfortable with, or be put into a hospital by court order. I'd personally suggest what would be the best for the health of her and child.

G.G - Aledo High School Anatomy

11.24.08

If I were Sheryl's physician, I would suggest that she go into the hospital but I wouldn't force her under a court order. At the onset of her pregnancy, she weighed 199 pounds, and only standing at 5'4", she isn't at the point of being skinny to an unhealthy point. Although it's not healthy to lose 30 pounds in 28 weeks of pregnancy, I believe that there is still hope without having to take drastic measures. I would inform her of all of the risks of being anorexic while carrying a child and why it is important to stay healthy, then have her sign papers claiming that she was well informed and understood completely. I would do everything in my will to help and still offer hospitalization, but not under a court order.

K.K.- Aledo High School, Anatomy and Physiology

11.23.08

In my opinion, it is not unethical to discharge Sheryl, but only after measures have been taken to inform her about the decisions she is making. I would definitely sit down with her and honestly let her know what could happen if she doesn't reform. I would also recommend a psychiatrist for her to visit, and if the patient shows no compliance to the prescribed solutions (eating more, staying healthy, etc.), then I would have her sign a release stating that she was informed of the risks, and the discharge her. As for involuntary hospitalization, the patient, being an adult woman, has the right to autonomy, and hospitalizing her involuntarily would be stripping her of her autonomy. However, if a psychiatrist deems her completely hazardous to herself and others (her unborn baby), then this instance would be worthy of stripping the patient of their autonomy.

R. Mc.- Aledo High School Anatomy Class

11.23.08

I would tell her if you do not do what I am saying then the baby will probably die and tell her that under the Texas penal code it states "a person commits an offense (murder) if she intentionally or knowingly causes the death of an individual. Then I would take the steps to hospitalize her under a court order. She has a very serious eating disorder that could not only hurt her but kill the baby within her. She needs to be under supervision to make sure she and the baby are healthy for the birth and then would I only suggest she goes to a counselor for her eating disorder. If you were

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to not take action and just go on letting her hurt herself and the baby and then the baby dies you could be in some serious legal trouble. I'd do what I thought was best for the patient , hospitalizing her and keeping her healthy till the baby is born and then suggesting she sees a counselor about the eating disorder and how it is seriously effecting her life.

C.M. Aledo High - Anatomy class

11.22.08

If I was her doctor, I would attain a court order for her hospitalization. Classes would not be affective at this point because she is 7 months pregnant and immediate action is necessary for the survival of the baby. However, if she refused treatment in the hospital, I would then attain a court order for her to be admitted to a psychiatric hospital. The most important thing in this case is the health of the child, and the mother seems incapable of comprehending the consequences of her disorder have on her child. If the child was to be killed by malnutrition, I as her doctor would be liable. The legal route in this case is the safest for the child, mother, and doctor.

N.V. Aledo High School, Anatomy.

11.22.08

The case's mental condition is harmful to herself and her child. However, forcing the case to undertake inpatient psychiatric care would be a violation of the individual's rights. Because the case is over the legal age, the decisions about the case's health can only be decided by the case only. As a physician, I would further educate the case about the effects of her condition with regard to her pregnancy. I would require the case to sign a form stating that the case understands her situation and is choosing to ignore my medical opinion regardless of the her health and the baby's health. If harm comes to the case or her baby, I would not be liable if charged with negligence.

Also, I would not diagnose Sheryl with having anorexia nervosa. Her BMI is actually 29, which would classify her as overweight (almost obese). With regard to Sheryl's current weight, I would expect her baby to be perfectly healthy.

K.D., Aledo High School

11.22.08

If I was Sheryl's physician, I would first offer her outpatient treatment to see if she would change her ways, because education and counseling could possibly open her eyes to what she is doing to herself and her unborn child. In the event that she refused the outpatient treatment or took the treatment and still continued to refuse to comply with it, I would take the necessary steps to hospitalize her under court order. It's not only herself she is putting in danger, it is an unborn child. The fact that she has LOST weight during pregnancy and is still unhappy with her weight is frightening, because it means she will still continue to use laxatives and refuse to eat. In addition to her own opinion about herself, her boyfriend does not approve of psychiatric care and is not involved in her treatment, meaning she has no one really to monitor her anorexic behavior. Her parents want her to return home so they can be assured of the baby's health, but Sheryl can easily refuse to do that, seeing how she is a 24 year old woman and not required to do anything she doesn't want to do.

I don't believe it is ethical to discharge Sheryl for not following treatment because she has someone else's life in her hands. If it was just herself she was responsible for, I personally would let her do what she chose, because it is her life and her body. However, with a child in the mix, it

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becomes more difficult to ignore the fact that she does have a serious problem and another person is paying the price for it, not just herself. If she refuses to realize on her own that the way she is living is hurting her baby, involuntary treatment in a psychiatric hospital is probably best, so her child will be born healthy. I feel that if she is not forced to have help following her treatment and making sure her baby is healthy, the baby will most likely not survive or be born prematurely and malnourished. Anorexic mothers are more likely to be depressed when their child is born, so who knows what will happen to the child after birth, in addition to what he or she has already been through. If Sheryl is forced to comply with her treatment, it will most likely help her realize the damage she can do, and has been doing, to herself and to her baby. Involuntary psychiatric care would be best for both Sheryl and her child, if, and only if, Sheryl refused to change her eating habits on her own.

B.M. - Sachse High School – Forensics

11.21.08

Personally, I believe you should get a court order to hospitalize her. The main issue is the baby's safety, and if she continues down this path, she will most likely kill this unborn child. It would also be wise to enroll her in some support groups or group therapy to help her through this difficult time. Make sure she is educated on the dangers involved to her and her child, and inform the boyfriend and parents as well so they can have a better understanding of the situation. I do not believe that it is ethical to discharge a patient that has an obvious altered mental state, and involuntary treatment might be necessary until the child is born.

M.S.-North Crowley High School- A&P

11.21.08

If I was her physician I would try to persuade her to get treatment and help by telling her that her baby will die or become seriously damaged when born if she keeps on living like this. I would let her ultimately decide but not before she changed her mind. I would do all I could to show her different evidence of things that have happened to patients like this in the past. I would offer her everything I could that would make her understand and do the right thing. I think it would be best for her to stay at a hospital or some kind of institution that would help her change her lifestyle till she learned to deal with this and alter the way she saw herself. I wouldn't go as far as a court order unless she absolutely wouldn't listen to what I had to say and I couldn't persuade her.

S.O.

11.21.08

I think that Sheryl should get as much help as possible. She isn't only hurting the baby but she is hurting herself too. The best thing for her to do would be hospitalized because she isn't listening to the doctors when she is home, so she needs to be there to where the doctors can keep an eye on her. She also needs to have a little bit more information to let her know that she is hurting the baby. Also giving her the choice to be put in counseling would be another great idea.

This situation does warrant for involuntary treatment in a psychiatric hospital because she is having problems with anorexia nervosa and she has had problems with it before. Psychiatric help would just help her realize that she is harming her body and her unborn baby. It would also help her realize she needs to eat the way the doctor has told her to.

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C.B. North Lamar High School-HST

11.21.08

In my opinion I feel that if I were the doctor I would treat both her and the baby under strong supervision. I would make sure that she got the best care because she is putting two people in danger and not just herself. Since she has been in this condition of anorexia for a long time, she would need the support of her family and friends during this time to be of some type of encouragement to her so that she can stay on track. I would recommend her to some type of counseling and education program just so that she can understand what if going to really happen if she continues doing what she is doing. I would take the basic rules used by doctors to treat her and the baby to make sure that both of them become healthy.

S.H.-North Crowley High School, Anatomy and Physiology

11.21.08

If I was her doctor, I would really do my best to try to get her into a hospital. She is really jeopardizing her and the baby's life, which is very unfair to the baby. I know people don't like to be controlled, but in cases like these where a life could be at stake, you have to take all necessary steps to help. So if it takes the doctor going to get a court order, then so be it. Some people in this life need more help than they are willing to give themselves, so you have to step in and help. She should also be educated on anorexia and put into counseling, because basically she is saying that she does not care about the life of her child. And also she can have depression after the pregnancy after the birth, if she has to have an unnatural birth, so obviously this is about more than these 9 months. It's crazy how she thinks she is getting "fat". That is unreal to me. So I say get her into a hospital for some major treatment, by any means necessary.

L.H. North Crowley High School Anatomy & Physiology

11.20.08

In my opinion, Sheryl is living in America; therefore she does have the freedom of choice. It's her life, her body, and her baby. If I were her physician, I wouldn't force her into doing something she doesn't want to do. I highly agree that what she is doing to herself and her unborn baby is terribly wrong because she is not only putting herself in danger, but also another life. I would educate and counsel her about her eating disorder and the dangerous effects it would leave for the both of them. I would definitely find a person who went through what she is going through to give her a better understanding of what might happen and show her that it is possible to turn her life around. Although I couldn't push her into doing something she doesn't want, as her physician, it would be my duty to take action and do what is necessary for the good of the patient. I would schedule more appointments with the doctor so that her health can be monitored more frequently and find her the top nutritionist in the area. If her health were to worsen, I wouldn't get a court order because again that would be forcing her to do something she doesn't want, but I would strongly suggest that she stays in the hospital until she gets better. Even though Sheryl is living an unhealthy lifestyle, I would never make her do anything with force because in the end she might take out all her anger and stress on her eating disorder and make her conditions worse. I would just be there by her side and show her all the support I can give and hope that she will turn her life around.

D.N.

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11.20.08

In my perspective, if I was Sheryl's doctor, I would highly advise her to get counseling and possibly get a court order to hospitalize her for the remainder of her pregnancy. It's a very risky measure to leave her by herself or even with her parents for that matter. She needs to be supervised every step of the way. In addition to the extra care she would get, I would also talk to her frequently on the dangers of anorexia and how it could be devastating to the birth and growth of her baby. Since she has a history of this disorder it is essential to keep her informed.

But given the fact that she is a human being and a possible future mother, she has to make her own choice. Whether to stay in the same condition she is in or listen to the doctor's orders in order to have a successful birth. This type of situation would require psychiatric treatment regardless if she has the baby or not. Not only is the disorder dangerous to her, but also to the baby. The baby has a will to live only if the mother is willing to not torture herself simply because she thinks she'll get fat. Although I have stated my opinion, this issue primarily relies on the woman herself and if she wants to bring a new born into this world.

H.R. North Crowley High School – A&P

11.20.08

If I were Sheryl's physician I believe I would refer her to an outpatient treatment. This way she can learn about the harm she's causing her baby, making her feel guilty, and hopefully giving her a revelation about her harmful eating disorder. Personally, I think it is her right to choose what she wants to do. You can't force her to do anything against her will without her being highly upset and betrayed, which would possibly cause her to lash out at others and still harm the baby. Also, I would never discharge her from the hospital where she can be monitored and taken care for. Although, I would not force her to do anything, I would be highly suggestive to both her and her family, in hopes that she would change her mind on the situation. It is wrong to make any patient do something they're against, so the hospital and doctors must honor her wishes even if they know it's wrong.

L.T.-North Crowley HS, Anatomy & Physiology

11.20.08

If I was the physician in this case, and the patient was not following the treatment plan prescribed to her, I would take steps to hospitalize her under a court order and get her psychiatric care. Obviously if she is not responding to orders given by physicians and still losing weight, she is putting the baby in danger. She shows no real sign of commitment to the care of the unborn child which she conceived and should have responsibility for. She refuses help from her parents, and her boyfriend doesn't like the idea of psychiatric treatment which shows she doesn't have a source of motivation to change her actions. Not only is she putting the baby's life in danger, but her own life could also hang in the balance if the situation becomes extreme. Anytime a person's life is at stake, in this case two people's lives, care should be forced to prevent the death or deaths of the patients involved in the situation.

J.B.S. North Crowley High School - A&P

11.20.08.

If I were her physician, I would inform her on the harm that she is doing to herself and to the baby. Hopefully informing her on the harm she is doing will make her think about how she could

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fix her problem. As I explain the bad factors of being anorexia, I will enroll her into a hospital that could help her even more with the problem she has. She obviously doesn't have enough help in her life and she is nowhere close to helping herself on her own. So hopefully the hospital would help her so she won't be so light and anorexic. I would then talk to the father and her parents and explain that what she is doing is wrong and she needs help immediately. Even though the father might be scared, fear is a sign of denial and he is in denial that he doesn't know how to make her better. Like I said hopefully she will understand that what I have told her is the truth and that hospital treatment is the best thing for her right now.

AC - North Crowley High School Anatomy and Physiology

11.20.08

If I were Sheryl's physician, I would advise her by letting her know the facts and consequences of what might happen if she were to refuse to eat because of her anorexia nervosa. I would tell her that she will need to eat for the sake of the baby's life, and if she doesn't, she will make the baby not get the nutrients it needs to survive. It is not only damaging and fatal to the baby, but also to herself. Because she is starving herself because she is getting fat, she just will not eat. If she still refuses to eat even after I try to convince her that eating normally would be the best option possible for a healthy baby, I will probably have to get her involuntary treatment in a psychiatric hospital. It is damaging and fatal to her health, and she can possibly die if she refuses to eat. It is unethical to me to force someone to do something against their will; after all, she does have rights. It is when another life is at jeopardy that I will have to make unethical decisions to save a life. I believe that the decisions I will make will save the baby and possibly her own life, so in the end everyone will be happy and alive. Her life will be better and healthier after the treatment along with the unborn child.

D. P.

11.20.08

Personally, if I were Sheryl's physician, I would first ask her if she even wanted to have this baby or if she was just doing it for her parent's and boy friend. If she confirmed that she did want to have the baby because she wanted it, then I would tell her that if she wanted a healthy, beautiful baby then she needs to first take care of herself so the baby inside of her will be taken care of as well. I would tell her the ways she should go about doing that and hope she would follow those steps. If, after meeting with her and talking with her, I believed she needed some kind of counseling, then I would refer her to the best choice I could offer her. I know it's common for a mother to give birth to an unhealthy baby and then feel guilty that she could have done something better during the pregnancy and then go into a depression. I would try my hardest to prevent even the possibility of Sheryl going through that. If after counseling and treatment by the doctor, she was still not listening and slowly killing her baby, then I would go to the courts. That baby inside of her may not be considered a real person yet and just an embryo, but with the right care it could would for sure become a certified person. In that case, I would use every resource I had to get that baby through alive and in the best condition possible. I wouldn't involuntarily force Sheryl to have her baby, I still believe she is capable enough to make her own decision on having it or not. The only thing is that if she did want to have that baby, then she would have to abide by my rules, no negotiations like the diet pills on the weekend or anything.

T.H. - North Crowley High School

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11.20.08

In my point of view, if I were her physician I would do whatever I felt was right and the best for the patient. Because the main goal of a doctor is to save the patient and do what would be best for them. I definitely would not leave it up to the patient to decide unless I had no choice; it is obvious that the patient isn't aware of what is medically best for her because she is anorexic. I would suggest that she visit a psychiatrist and stay in the hospital while she is pregnant; in her condition, the baby could be in danger and therefore, should be monitored. If she refused to do I suggested I would take the case to court in order to ensure the safety of the mother and the unborn fetus. I do not think it is ethical to discharge the patient for not following her recommendations, in my view; it is more ethical to keep the patient in the hospital and monitor her even closer in order to ensure that she does follow the treatment. In this case there is warrant for involuntary care in a psychiatric facility because she has an eating disorder and should be monitored and taught about the dangers of being anorexic for oneself and for the fetus. I don't agree that it is the patient's life and she should do what she wants because I feel that as the physician it is my job to do what's best for the patient and to suggest and give out the finest care possible.

J.T.

11.19.08

God has given every human being life and free will. This free will is what allows us to develop into unique individuals - it is a necessity of life. But what do we do if a conceived child has its God-given privileges endangered by a mother that refuses to eat? Should we look away and condemn the baby to a worse life, possibly even death, accepting it as a mother's choice, or should we intervene and force the mother to eat for the sake of her baby's survival so that it may one day have the chance to choose its own destiny? Obviously this is a choice between what God has blessed man with - do we prevent life to advocate free will, or prevent free will to advocate life? Which choice is the lesser of two evils?

Many will say that, ultimately, the mother should choose what she feels is right, for it is her own choice and we have no authority to stop her. And I agree. Nobody, not a single person on this earth, can restrict the freedom of another. But, it is also for this reason that I would encourage a court order to hospitalize the mother and give her counseling. It is true that this action would oppose her free will, but, when one thinks about it, isn't the mother not eating and killing the child the ultimate act of free will prevention. The baby is never even given the CHANCE or the CHOICE. God has given life to this baby and the ability for free will with it. Who are we to take away the Gift of God COMPLETELY? Sure, forcing the mother to eat is an act against her will, but at least it would only be temporary. She will be able to go back to her life and make all her own decisions afterwards. Not doing so will result in a baby losing its freedom entirely along with its life. There is no return to normal life because life has ceased to exist within the child.

In the end, we are condemned to choose between two crimes: Murder or Temporary Oppression. It may seem a difficult choice, but is not, in this case, Temporary Oppression by far the lesser evil?

T.S. North Crowley High School -A&P

11.19.08

In my opinion, it seems that Sheryl is not very aware that she is not only severely putting herself in danger but her baby as well. Not only is she causing them both serious health conditions but risking both of their lives. If I was Sheryl's physician, I would alert her that if she continues to binge and abuse her pregnancy, then it would be very well close to aborting the baby. As her

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physician, I would be certain to educate Sheryl of the dangerous risks to her and the baby if she continued this disorder. These include miscarriage, gestational diabetes, complications during labor, spontaneous abortion and damage to the heart and liver.

Upon getting pregnant, Sheryl should have been aware of what she was getting herself into, responsibility and her biggest fear, weight gain. Although my opinion may differ from others, I believe Sheryl needs to be hospitalized to better care herself and her baby. However, it is her decision. I consider this case very similar to abortion. As long as Sheryl knows that she is putting her baby's life at risk, she should have the decision whether she wants special care or not. Just as abortion is a women's right.

L. P. - North Crowley High School, Anatomy and Physiology

11.19.08

Although the doctor's decision may raise questions about a woman's freedom of choice, ultimately the doctor needs to take measures into his own hands and get help for this woman because she seems incapable of helping herself. If I were her physician I would take legal action to make sure that the measures are taken to get Sheryl help. Telling her the possible consequences and advising her on what she should do to keep the baby healthy seem to have no impact on her. She is caught up in her own appearance and is only thinking of herself. Someone has to step in and do something about it, and her doctor is the only one with that authority. It would be unethical to discharge her because someone has to take responsibility for her unborn child. As her doctor, I would get a court order for endangerment of a child so that she can get the help she needs from people who are able to make her eat and take better care of herself. Although she may detest and be uncooperative, it is in the best interest for her child. With help from a psychiatric hospital, Sheryl will be able to have a healthy pregnancy and be able to fight her battle with anorexia.

K.L. - Aledo High School, Anatomy

11.19.08

I would absolutely offer her some sort of counseling and education. She needs to be informed about the effects anorexia has on your body, especially because she is pregnant. I would suggest she see a psychiatrist about her disorder, so maybe we could find out what is it that is causing her to believe she is too fat. If she refused to accept any of these offers or follow my suggestions, I would take matters into my own hands and hospitalize her under a court order. She needs to know that she isn't just eating for herself; she is eating for two, her and her unborn child so she will definitely need to gain those 30 pounds she lost, plus some. It is normal for a pregnant woman to weigh more and look fat. This woman needs to be taught that. If I were her physician, I would highly recommend she go into a hospital, that way she would have 'round-the-clock care and be fed at least three square meals. She needs to be in good shape in order for her to have a healthy pregnancy.

L.H. North Crowley H.S.-A&P

11.19.08

If I was her physician, I would try to help her. I would be her counselor and help her to keep her baby survive. I would try to explain her how to eat food and how to get nutrients without injury. And I will tell her, what is the bad things will happen to her if she got the diet pill and do not take care of her pregnant life. The main reason that I want to help her because of her baby that didn't even know anything. If I try my best but I think I couldn't help her, I would tell her to go to hospital

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and ask the professional doctor, how could she do until her pregnant life. But if she still doesn't want to go to hospital I will just let her use her life. After she knows the dangerous things that happen to her, she will come back and ask for help from the physician or the professional doctor.

P.P.– North Crowley High School - Anatomy & Physiology

11.19.08

If I was Sheryl's physician I would get her immediate medical help. Refusing to follow her meal plan while she is pregnant can cause major damage to her nursing baby and even to herself. Losing 30 pounds while you are pregnant is ridiculous, furthermore I would immediately get a court order to hospitalize her and get the adequate counseling and education. None of her family members or her boyfriend care entirely for her safety or the safety of the baby so the physician must step in and set things right. I would put her in a psychiatric hospital and show her that Anorexia nervosa can really be hazardous or even fatal for the baby it was malnourished. I think it is ethical to discharge her for not following her recommendations, she obviously does not know the consequences that her actions can get her so she needs to go to a psychiatric hospital and into counseling to deal with her disorder.

A.A. - North Crowley High School-Anatomy and Physiology

11.19.08

If I were Sheryl's physician, I would probably put her on some sort of outpatient treatment, with regular meeting with her doctor and a psychiatrist about her disorder and let her know what she is doing to the baby. I would have someone monitor her in her normal life, like a close friend or relative since the boyfriend wants no involvement. I don't think her situation necessarily warrants intensive psychiatric care at a hospital because she may not even realize what she is doing to her child. However, if she continues to have this kind of deleterious behavior toward her body, then perhaps hospitalization would be necessary, but only in an extreme case. Her use of diet pills and laxatives is, of course, unacceptable, not simply because of their immediate result of weight loss, but also because of the harmful side effects that could potentially harm the baby.

The big question is whether or not a doctor has the right to forcibly administer treatment to a patient who consciously doesn't want it. Above all, the doctor must talk with the patient first and try to help her that way before proceeding to the extreme case of forced hospitalization.

C.L. North Crowley High School-Anatomy & Physiology

11.19.08

In attempting to think also from the patient's perspective, as being a new parent, would want the best for my child regardless of my Anorexia. I being her Physician would offer counseling, in hopes that from that counseling she could also be educated on how harmful anorexia is and how it could be devastating to the baby and the complications it could cause. Some other things I would suggest as her Physician would be to hospitalize her if proven incorporative or as soon as has she has become a vital threat to the unborn child. I think that in this case by her not taking better care of herself on purpose and harm is afflicted on the baby or worse, could be a notion of possible manslaughter. I also think that this case does warrant for involuntary treatment, because of her already known eating disorder, in a psychiatric hospital. I wouldn't exactly consider it entirely a matter of controlling her or her life, only as I have stated before, if proven unable to suite the benefit of the unborn baby's health, life and that of her own.

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Posted Comments: 11/17/08 –11/25/08

Z.M. -North Crowley High School, Anatomy & Physiology

11.19.08

I believe it is unethical to discharge Sheryl for not following treatment recommendations. Patients are always hard to cope with and will not always listen to doctor's orders but that does not mean they cannot be helped. As a physician, I would strongly encourage and motivate her to fix her eating habits because anorexia is not only dangerous to her at this point, but also her baby. I would explain to her that the most important thing that she could give her baby is proper nutrition. Her baby needs to be healthy when it is born so that it does not have problems while growing up. I think it would be wise to receive psychiatric care for Sheryl because that will get her to not care so much about how "fat" she looks and she and her baby would be less at risk of danger. She would begin to eat properly because by then she would realize what she is doing now is wrong. No matter how much I would try to persuade her, it is her choice in the end what she wants to do. I do not think a court order is necessary because she has her right of freedom of choice. I personally do not think this situation warrants involuntary treatment in a psychiatric hospital because involuntary hospitalization and/or treatment violate an individual's civil rights. Involuntary treatment refers to a medical treatment undertaken without a person's consent, but in this case, Sheryl has the right to do what she pleases. I am hoping that she makes the more lawful decision and strives to change things for the better for her and her baby.

R.S.

11.18.08

If I was the Physician, I would highly recommend that she was sent to a mental institution, were she would be under observation. I wouldn't want to take any more risk in the mother hurting the unborn child. This would only be necessary if she did not follow the instructions I have set after speaking to her. I believe it's completely ethical to release her from my care, because she no longer is taking my advice to keep herself and her unborn child safe. This situation warrants involuntary treatment in a psychiatric hospital, because she is a danger to herself and others. I would help her as much as I am obligated to do in the realm of my physician role, but once it crosses the line of forcing her to take care of herself it should be taken into the hands of an institutional facility.

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