

INTERACTIVE ETHICS CASE FOR OCTOBER – DECEMBER 2008

Posted Comments: 11/24/08 – 12/05/08

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 one self 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 her self 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

12.2.08

If I were Sheryl's physician, I would take steps to hospitalize her under a court order. Not only is Sheryl harming herself she is harming her unborn child. I believe if Sheryl is not hospitalized immediately her baby and herself could be at serious risk. Sheryl is late enough in her pregnancy

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where there is simply not enough time to wait for her to make the right decision. More than likely it will be too late when Sheryl really understands what she is doing to her baby and herself. I feel that it is my job, being her physician, to make sure Sheryl and her baby are safe even if that means taking drastic measures by getting a court order for her to be hospitalized. I would later suggest a support group to help Sheryl cope and to make sure she stays on track after being released.

T.M. Aledo High School A&P

12.2.08

If I were her physician, I would undergo the procedures to obtain the court order to place her in the psychiatric hospital and make sure she is well taken care of for the health of her baby. I would offer her, her husband, and family education on her disorder and the risks of the baby. This would ensure the future of the unborn child and the mother. Who will think of the health of the child if not the mother? Who can vitally support the child if not the mother? She is able to control her intake of nutrients while the unborn child is not. If she is unable to make the best decisions for the future of her child then I would take every possible option for the future unborn child even if it meant bypassing the mothers' rights.

M.G.

12.2.08

If I were Sheryl's physician I would take her to court on the basis that she is emotionally unstable and incapable of making rational decisions about her health and medical care. The court would then give her loving and caring parents temporary authority over all of her medical decisions. I would then inform her parents about all of the incredible dangers of her actions and what the dire consequences would be to both Sheryl and her unborn child. I would encourage her parents to check her into a hospital where she will be constantly monitored to prevent her from harming herself or her baby. She would receive required treatment, education, and counseling at the hospital.

It would be unethical to discharge Sheryl from my care for not following treatment recommendations because I know her physical and emotional state and I know that discontinuing her care would enable her to continue harming herself and her child. In doing that, I would be breaking the Hippocratic Oath (do no harm).

C.P. - Haltom High School - AP Biology

12.2.08

I personally think that as a pregnant woman who actually wants to have the baby you give up some of your rights for the life of that child you want to bring into the world. So, as a physician you would not only be responsible for the overall health of the woman, but the child too. So therefore you would be looking into what would be best for the CHILDS health, and not just what the mother WANTS to happen. If there is a risk that something she is doing would hurt the baby in anyway her family would want the best for the child in the long run as well, and it would save a lot on future hardships and medical expenses (or even funeral expenses if the child end up losing its own life because of the mothers actions). However the total hospitalization of the Sheryl would be the last thing I would do, because trying to keep her there would probably only make her fight the change. Counseling would be my first offer towards her, and if she only seemed worse after a

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month then I would try hospitalization. She says she wants this child but then she wants to hurt her body and her child in the process. As her physician you would have to do things that would be for the best of the child as well, so you might just have to do some things that she wouldn't want, she might even thank you in the long run.

M.L.M. – Haltom High School

12.2.08

I would do whatever would be necessary to keep the child in her womb healthy, as for the woman's choice of freedom to do as she wishes, she has a responsibility to the child growing inside her and anything she does that can effect the child must be stopped because the child has no say-so, so the woman shouldn't either. Since the woman knows it's wrong to take laxatives and diet pills, I would suggest her to stop her condition and correctly follow her meal schedule. If she refused to stop then I would get her psychological help and keep her in a hospital in order to monitor her eating habits. Yes, I would go so far as to get a court order, it wouldn't be hard since she had a past history of a mental disorder (anorexia nervosa) and has a baby to take care of. As a doctor, I am obligated to take care of both the woman and child. By hospitalizing the woman, I am getting help for her condition and at the same time ensuring the child's health.

G.N.R.

12.2.08

Sheryl has lost an abnormal amount of weight during her pregnancy. This is scary for the baby. Sheryl should be offered opportunities to quit her habits for the baby. Because they are willing to help, her parents should be granted temporary responsibility over Sheryl, allowing them to monitor her food intake. Here, Sheryl can take action, knowing that if she refuses to cooperate that she must submit to more intensive measures. If this method proves inefficient, Sheryl should be admitted to a hospital and discharged after the baby's delivery. After the baby is safe from Sheryl's self-harming eating disorder, Sheryl should be returned the right to decide whether or not she wishes to solve her own health issues.

S.B.

12.2.08

If I were her physician, I would suggest that she go in for treatment for her anorexia. It would be beneficial for both her and her baby's health. She needs to receive help and treatment for it whether she was pregnant or not. But, because she has a baby, it's dangerous for her and the child as well.

T.S. - Haltom High School - AP Biology

12.2.08

As this woman's doctor I would first suggest outpatient treatment with counseling and/or medication. However after analyzing the case I believe she wouldn't be very compliant with such treatment and I would then take steps to treat her under court order if necessary. I am in favor of such drastic measures because this woman made the choice to have a baby and therefore should be responsible for taking care of herself and her unborn child. I don't think this violates her rights to free choice because she first made the decision to have a child. After that initial choice the well being of her unborn child should become a priority. If the woman remains on this

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self destructive path it puts not only her, but her child in danger as well. Also the fact that the woman's health is also in peril due to a physical and psychological disorder makes the decision to treat her with or without her full consent even clearer.

A.C. – Haltom High School – AP Biology

12.2.08

What do you mean ethical?! There is a child involved here. If the patient is released and something happens to her, the doctor cannot be there to help her and the baby. By remaining in the doctor's care, the woman can be closely monitored for the baby's sake. Because of her past history, she is most likely to continue abusing herself. It is essential that her epitome is not reprimanded by her behavior.

This definitely warrants involuntary treatment in psychiatric care. When my girlfriend was pregnant, she suffered this same issue with an eating disorder. The doctor eventually sent her to a psychiatric ward to be under intensive supervision. My child was saved and now little Zachus is in my care. If this lady is not put into treatment, think of what might happen to the boyfriend if this baby is put in danger.

C.B. - Haltom High School (AP Biology)

12.2.08

The patient does not fit the usual physical criteria for an eating disorder patient. At a starting weight of 199 pounds, she fit well into the obesity range with her BMI at 34.2. Even after losing 30 pounds, she is at the top of the overweight range on the BMI scale (BMI of 29). Being overweight during pregnancy can lead to risks such as preeclampsia and gestational diabetes. Also, overweight pregnant women have a higher risk of premature births, C-section deliveries, and stillborns, the same risks pregnant women with eating disorders have. It would serve the patient well to lose some weight. However, it needs to be done in a healthy manner. This should be achieved through a healthy diet and exercise. The fact that she lost 30 pounds in 28 weeks is not as alarming as how she did it. It is unhealthy for the baby and probable that the baby is not getting adequate nutrition. The patient's food intake needs to be monitored for the rest of her pregnancy. She can lose weight as long as the baby is getting adequate nutrition and is developing properly.

N.B. - Haltom High School - AP Biology

12.2.08

I think you should get a court order to hospitalize her. Right now, the most important thing is the baby's safety. If she keeps doing what she's doing, she will kill this baby. Support groups would probably help a lot, and she could understand what she is doing to this baby. If she kills the baby, she could be charged with murder, and I don't think anyone wants that. Her boyfriend and her parents need to understand what is going on, so they can help her more. I don't think it's ethical to discharge a patient that has an obvious mental problem, and I think involuntary treatment would be necessary until she has her baby.

L.B. Aledo High School Anatomy

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12.2.08

If I were this woman's physician, I would let her know the likelihood of her baby not surviving and her not surviving. I would explain to her that she will lose her weight again once the baby is born and that losing weight is extremely harmful to the baby especially when it is 30 pounds and she should be gaining weight instead of losing. Next I would refer her to a psychiatrist to see if that helped and at the same time I would get a court order to make sure she follows the diet plan 100%. I would inform her that she could be prosecuted by law for knowingly endangering the life of her infant.

If that still did not work, I would get a court order to hold her in the hospital until after the baby was born. I believe that the Sheryl's rights do not matter as much now seeing as how she is about two months away from her due date and the baby is suffering. Discharging this patient would be unethical because as a doctor, you are sworn to help your patients and Sheryl clearly needs help.

After all is said and done, if after the baby is born, she is still not taking care of herself or her baby, I would mandate that she visit a psychiatrist and live with someone that could help take care of her and the baby until she is well.

K.G. Aledo High School Anatomy

12.1.08

In my opinion, I think it's time to take drastic measures with the patient. There have been multiple failed attempts to help the patient understand that she is potentially injuring the child. The patient had had a problem with anorexia pre-pregnancy and it has gotten increasingly worse during the first 28 weeks of the pregnancy. It will only get worse. Starting out at 199 pounds then drastically dropping to 169 is not healthy during the first 28 weeks of pregnancy when you should be gaining weight instead of losing.

I would recommend going to court and getting permission to place the patient into a hospital to be supervised under a physicians care 24 hours a day. If drastic measures aren't taken, then there is a great change the patient could lose the baby, deliver early, or become depressed after the baby is born. She is slowly killing this child and she isn't taking the responsibility to take care of it herself so someone must do it for her.

J.T. - Aledo High School- Anatomy

12.1.08

If I were Sheryl's physician, I would thoroughly explain to her what the risks are of her behavior. I would stress the fact that she is not only putting herself at risk, but also her baby's life. Since she does weigh 169lbs and stands 5'4", she is not unhealthily skinny. Therefore, I would give her a few weeks to make her own choices. I would also try to persuade her boyfriend and parents, as well as her friends to help her and encourage correct behavior. If she still won't comply with our requests, I would get a court order to hospitalize her, for her and her child's safety. Counseling and Support Groups might also be necessary in order to boost her self confidence and mentally stabilize her. She needs to realize that she is not fat and that it is absolutely normal to gain weight during pregnancy.

D.B. Aledo High School - Anatomy & Physiology

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12.1.08

Normally, because the patient is not yet at a deadly weight, I would offer her outpatient treatment, including education and counseling. The fact that the patient is pregnant changes everything. The main focus of the case is no longer about the mother's health, but the baby's health. Because the mother is refusing to follow her doctor's orders by not following a given meal plan and by taking diet pills and laxatives, she is endangering the baby's life. In this case, anorexia nervosa should be looked at as a mental disorder. The mother is sick, and can no longer be held accountable for making her own decisions regarding her health. I would take the needed steps to hospitalize the patient under court order. I would also warrant involuntary treatment in a psychiatric hospital.

D.B. - Aledo High School; Anatomy

12.1.08

Personally, I would want her to be hospitalized and cared for, so she won't lose the baby. At the same time, it should still be her decision on what her actions are. Her action will have a consequence, and she will have to live with it. Unless she is mentally unable to make choices, then nothing physical should be forced on to her. The husband needs to be more involved with his wife while this is occurring. He's also the only one who can take the issue to court, and have an actual chance of doing something to help her.

D.G.-North Crowley High School- A&P

12-01-08

Being Sheryl's physician, I would absolutely be concerned with her health, mainly due to the fact that she is pregnant already beginning her third trimester. In my point of view, I believe that she is a threat to herself and to the baby she is carrying. Leaving her to decide what decisions to make in a situation such as hers would be of absolute negligence on my part. A court order in this particular case would be appropriate due to that fact that she is not following her meal plan completely, which affects the baby, and also her mass amounts of laxative intake. It really does not matter if she just takes them on weekends. Both the baby's health along with her own health should be her primary concerns. I personally do not believe that counseling and education would help because she is so far out of it. Even with the knowledge that she is pregnant, she still continues to indirectly torture herself. Pretty much the most logical thing to do would be to hospitalize her for the duration of the pregnancy or to do daily check-ins with her. There are two lives that are at stake and certain measures should be taken to protect them, even if it's from themselves. A major helper for hope that Sheryl will get better would be to give her as much love possible. Her boyfriend is just helping her fall down the stairs. All we can do after this is hope and pray that she and the baby will be fine. Anorexia Nervosa is a major problem in the world nowadays. The sooner it is treated, the more likely it is that the person will have a full recovery. The longer you wait the less chance of saving this person because it just progresses to a point where it is almost unstoppable.

J.H. - South Texas High School for Health Professions (Health Science Technology)

12.1.08

If I was Sheryl I would listen to what the doctors say. In Sheryl's case she thinks she's fat but she's really not. She just needs to think about what it would be like if she lost her baby and then think about if she kept the baby and not lose it. If I was her I would stop and think about what I have done to get this way and see if I can change it. I think she does need to go back to her

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parent's house so she can be watched about what she does. I would do it just so I can save the baby.

C.D.

12.1.08

As the physician of pregnant women I would consider both the women and her baby as my patients and do whatever I could to keep both of them healthy. It is evident that carrying a child is not stopping Sheryl from her binge eating disorder, thus potentially harming her child. I would offer treatments such as educating Sheryl of the dangers of eating disorders and pregnancies or counseling. If Sheryl was unwilling to comply to either of those, I would then proceed to attempt to get a court order to hospitalize Sheryl so that we, as a hospital, can take the necessary steps to keep her and her baby healthy.

J.K. Aledo High School; Anatomy

12.1.08

Doctors need to do what is best for the unborn child. Her physician needs to clearly state all the problems that could occur to her unborn child if she keeps up the anorexia. If Sheryl still puts her baby in danger, it is clear that she is too into her appearance to realize the consequences that will happen to her baby. Therefore, her physician needs to get a court order, forcing her to get physical help from a hospital. By being at a hospital, people can monitor her closely to make sure she's eating right, and she can also fight her battle with anorexia.

P.L. - Aledo High School, Anatomy

12.1.08

If I was Sheryl's physician I would tell her to get personal treatment. If she was to refuse to do so then I would get a court order to put her into a psychiatric hospital. She has a serious eating disorder that could not only hurt her but kill the baby within her. If she was not put in a psychiatric hospital then I believe she would still continue eating the way she always has. In a psychiatric hospital she would be watched and the nurses would make sure she was eating the way she needs to for her and the babies health. Some may think this is wrong, but I think that is the only way we would know for sure the baby would be normal and healthy when it arrived.

J.B.-Aledo High School Anatomy

12.1.08

Anorexia nervosa seems to have a lot of negative effects on one's life, and causes plenty of collateral damage to other parties; in this case a baby's health is at stake. As Sheryl's physician, I would further educate her about her eating disorder as well as offer her counseling. Treatment in a psychiatric hospital is also warranted for Sheryl's well-being and that of her baby's. Realistically it comes down to Sheryl's decision, even I do order her to a psychiatric hospital, she is the one who ultimately decides if she will accept the help they give her.

M.P. North Crowley High School, Anatomy and Physiology

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12.1.08

If I were Sheryl's physician, I would not discharge her as my patient because that would be unethical. I would also be reluctant to hospitalize anyone against their will under most circumstances. I would encourage Sheryl to see a dietitian to help her understand her nutritional needs, and especially those of the developing fetus. Because she was 199 pounds at the onset of her pregnancy, she does not fit the profile of someone with anorexia nervosa. However, losing 30 pounds after becoming pregnant is probably not safe for her or her baby, and Sheryl needs to be informed about the damage she could be doing to her child. I would follow up frequently on this case, checking in daily. If Sheryl refuses to comply after being informed of all the risks, I would refer her to a psychiatrist; I would have Sheryl hospitalized only as a last resort.

L.P. - Aledo High School, Anatomy and Physiology

12.1.08

If I were Sheryl's doctor, I would definitely have concerns for her health. Since she has been using laxatives and over-the-counter diet pills to lose weight while pregnant is not a good sign. Although looking at her information and seeing that she is 5'4" and started her pregnancy at 199lbs, most people would say that she isn't anorexic. Since the start of her pregnancy, she has lost 30 pounds in the first 28 weeks and now weighs 169lbs. Losing weight while pregnant is a very dangerous move because you want to gain weight and eat lots of nutritious and foods so that the baby can grow, not lose weight. Sheryl needs to sit down with her doctor and listen to what they have to say. She needs to hear how much stress she is putting her body under and the harmful consequences that come with not keeping good health while pregnant. Since both Sheryl's parents and boyfriend are excited about the new baby soon to be born, I think it would be best for her parents to keep her with them during the pregnancy to watch her closely. Her boyfriend on the other hand has made it clear that he wants nothing to do with her treatment, so I don't think he'd be very supportive of trying to get help. Since it is her right to refuse treatment and continue doing what she is doing, but she at least needs to hear the danger she is in and especially her baby. Doing this will make sure that the doctors and hospital aren't responsible for anything that happens.

A.S.

12.1.08

A woman should be able to make her own choices about her body; however, when a child is involved things tend to get a little more complicated even though it is her child. I would respect her personal decisions and not enforce anything upon her that would interfere with her free will and personal choice. As her doctor I would be sure to educate her about the effects of her decisions on her and her baby. She is following 80% of her meal plan which is fairly good. There is no need to hospitalize her under a court order or discharge her for not following treatment recommendations; however, if the situation were to get any worse I would feel as though my recommendations as a doctor were not wanted; I would discharge her. If she continued to lose weight during her pregnancy, I would feel obligated to warrant involuntary treatment in a psychiatric hospital. For the time being, I would focus on educating her with the facts of being anorexic while pregnant. I would try very hard to persuade her to see a counselor or psychiatrist since anorexia is a mental disorder. A doctor would have to walk a very fine line in such a case if he/she truly respects a person's rights of freedom and personal choice, yet the ethical concept is very controversial. Does this person have the obligation, the duty as a doctor to do everything he/she can to keep this woman and her child as healthy and safe as possible, or should this doctor respect this woman's human rights, lifestyle, and personal choice?

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

12.1.08

If I were Sheryl's physician, I would get her some kind of help. I would either put her in an institute so that there would be doctors and nurses watching and caring for her and the unborn baby. Or the other option, I would take is to try to convince Sheryl that it would be better not just for her but for her baby also that moving in with her parents where there is not as much stress. I am not just saying this because that is what her parents want, but if Sheryl does have her baby, when her baby is born way under-weight then she will know that she did it, and then try to do something even more harmful to herself.

I think taking steps to hospitalize her under a court order maybe a little too much, but it might help. It would kind of depend on how much she cares about the health of her baby; and her health in the future. Sheryl not following treatment recommendations is bad. But her boyfriend is the father of the baby, and should be there for Sheryl and the baby, and he not wanting to be a part of the treatment is hinting to her that he really does not care about her or the baby. That could be a reason she does not want to do the treatments. This could need help from the psychiatric hospital. The doctors are trying to help her, and she needs as much help as she can get. She just needs to open her eyes and notice that she is caring a human being and it will need more help when it is born if she does not take it when it is getting handed to her.

A.R.-Arlington High School Health Science

12.1.08

If I were Sheryl's physician, then I would offer her outpatient treatment, including education and counseling. She needs to get help before it is too late for the baby. One may say that Sheryl has the right to do whatever she wants with her health and she does but not when it affects another life. Sheryl's baby has the right to life so Sheryl needs to do all she can to help the baby. The physician should not discharge her but instead be persistent, encouraging, and helpful for Sheryl. Although it may be frustrating for the physician to deal with, he needs to keep pushing if not for Sheryl, then for the baby.

R.L Richland High School- Biology

12.1.08

I think Sheryl is past the point of counseling over her disorder. She's been this way for awhile and now it's too late for that. I would recommend counseling after the pregnancy, but I think the most important thing right now would be to make sure her baby survives. If I was her physician I would definitely try to get her to go to the hospital for help, but if she refused I would try to get a court order for her to be hospitalized even if it is against her will. She decided to create and keep this child and if she isn't going to ensure it a healthy life and do everything a "good" mother should then I believe the court should make her. When a woman decides to become a mother she has a responsibility to that child, and Sheryl isn't following through. I don't think it takes away from her rights because it was her right to become a parent and that is how she should act. I wouldn't think it ethical to discharge her because she is denying treatment. I would do what I think is best for her and her child. Getting her the help she and her child need would be my first priority.

M.T. - Aledo High School

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12.1.08

If I were Sheryl's physician I would offer her my help right away. This would be a decision in which she now has a choice of accepting my offer or not. It is for the health of her baby, and mainly hers. I don't think that a hospital would be a good idea for her because I believe that that would probably cause more trauma to her. I would first suggest that she meets with a psychologist. Hopefully this will help her understand that it is for the good of her baby's health. If that doesn't work then I would slowly take steps to hospitalize her under court orders.

D.C-- South Texas High School for Health Professions

12.1.08

If I were Sheryl's physician, I would take steps to obtain a court order to put her into a mental health facility that will make sure she eats well. She obviously is not mentally stable and has issues which need to be addressed by a trained person. It is not only her life she is putting in jeopardy but another as well. I believe that if a mother is more concerned about her body image then her child then she has some serious mental problems that need to be addressed immediately. If after her child is born she wants to do the absurd things she is doing now then so be it, but while there is someone else's life at risk too, she should not be able to participate in these dangerous acts of anorexia. I'm sure that once she gets help and comes to her senses she will realize how ludicrous her actions were and thank you for saving her and her child's life.

D.C.

12.1.08

If I were her physician, at first I would offer her counseling to show her how dangerous anorexia is and try to teach her about it to let her see the devastating effect to the birth and growth of her baby. If nothing changed or I cannot see that she is on the way to be getting better I would send her into the hospital AND take steps to hospitalize her under a court order. I would try to explain the situation and that she cannot decide on her own for herself and her unborn baby in that situation. Even if she doesn't want to go to the hospital she had to because it is my responsibility that nothing happened to her unborn because of anorexia.

I.S. AHS- Anatomy Class

12.1.08

If I were Sheryl's physician then I would advise her to pursue medical help. I would do everything in my power to make sure that she would take my advice, including talking to her boyfriend and parents so they could persuade her to take the medical help needed. If no one can persuade her to make this decision on her own then I would get a court order to make her get the medical attention. I would give her reasons to why binge eating is such a health hazard to her and her unborn baby. If something were to happen to her or her baby or both then I could be held responsible if I didn't make her get immediate medical help.

B.M. - Aledo High School, Anatomy

12.1.08

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I believe that a women's choice is whether or not to have sex. If she chooses to and becomes pregnant the baby's right to life overrides the mother's right to not have a child. She should not have engaged in behavior that put her at risk of an outcome she didn't want to happen. Because of this I believe any and all measures would be correct in protecting the baby's health. The doctor should follow all means to make sure the baby can develop as it should. I know many girls do not take care of themselves while they are pregnant but they are able to hide this from their families and their doctor. In that instance there isn't much that can be done for the baby, but when it is obvious to family and doctor I firmly believe recommending involuntary treatment in a psychiatric hospital would be a good idea. This would help the baby be better nourished and it would also help the mother to receive the help she needs long term. If she received counsel then maybe after the birth she would be able to be a good mother. Anyone with this kind of disorder needs professional help so she won't eventually lose her own life. So as I see it, it would be a win-win situation for both mom and baby to force mom to seek help.

K. B. Aubrey High School Anatomy & Physiology 10th Grade

12.1.08

As Sheryl's physician it would be my responsibility to evaluate the entire situation surrounding her pregnancy. It appears that her anorexic tendencies increased with the onset of her pregnancy, and since she was actually overweight at the beginning of her pregnancy the term anorexia appears to be more related to the fact that she possibly feels she is losing control of her life. She feels that the only thing she can control is her food intake. Pregnancy can be difficult for even a healthy woman to deal with and the pregnancy itself has probably added more tension, stress, and anxiety to Sheryl especially since it appears that she does not have much support from her unborn babies' father.

As a physician it is my responsibility not only to protect Sheryl but also to protect the unborn baby. I would offer her mandatory outpatient treatment to help her deal with the issues in her life that are causing her to refuse to eat which are putting her life and the life of her unborn in jeopardy. If the outpatient treatment did not cause a substantial change in her mental state resulting in a change in her eating habits then hospitalization would be required even if it had to come from a court order. I feel it would be unethical to discharge her for not following her treatment because then the baby's life as well as Sheryl's life would be put in more danger, and she would not have the chance to get the help that she needs to get her life back under control. If the education and counseling did not produce a change in Sheryl's eating patterns and mental stability then the final step would be a forced placement in a psychiatric hospital since she is not only endangering her life but the life of the baby. Even though many people feel it is a "woman's choice" to decide about a pregnancy, who gets to speak for the unborn baby? The physician has the only chance to help save the life of the mother and the baby as well.

B.A. Aubrey H.S Anatomy & Physiology

11.30.08

If I were Sheryl's physician I would first off talk to Sheryl about her baby and how excited she is about starting a family to get her comfortable with the situation. In my opinion it would be very important for me (The physician), to help her because I would take it as my fault if something went wrong with the baby at birth or even before birth. On this account I would then have her routinely come in for check-ups to monitor her health and make sure she is eating as directed. If Sheryl begins to lose more weight continuously, I would then think it would be necessary for a court order, for her to be hospitalized on her babies' sake of life, as well as hers.

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There are many opinions to this situation, and Sheryl's freedom is a big part of her legal abilities. I think the situation could be brought up as a form of abortion, by asking Sheryl, "Would you like to continue your unhealthy living along with the babies, or would you like to ensure your baby's life? Since there are not directly stated rights for Sheryl to be hospitalized it cannot be considered an involuntary treatment, especially if it is over the fact of life or death.

R.D.-Aubrey High School -Anatomy and Physiology

11.30.08

Sheryl is living an unhealthy life not only for her but also for her baby. If I were her physician I would set up an appointment with her, her parents, and her boyfriend. In this appointment I would cover the health risks and concerns I have for her. With her parents present as well as her boyfriend they would know the outcomes if she keeps up her unhealthy lifestyle. After going over all of the possible outcomes I would then refer her to a specialist which could help her condition. I would also give her the option of going to a psychiatric facility. If she chose to decline both of the offers I would have her, her parents, and her boyfriend sign a document with their acknowledgement that I had let them know my concerns and tried to get her help and that I had done everything within my power to help her. If she chose to refuse it, I would not be liable.

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

11.30.08

If I was Sheryl's physician, my first steps in treating her would be to talk to her boyfriend and her parents. Her boyfriend has expressed his opinion that he does not want to be a part of her treatment, but he has also said that he is excited about the birth of the baby. Due to these reactions, my first guess would be that he is only trying to support his girlfriend in her decisions, not trying to keep her thin. However, his statements could be sending false signals to Sheryl that he wants her to stay thin or else he might possibly leave her. Being single, it would be hard for Sheryl to support the baby by herself, so she is probably taking extra precautions to make sure this doesn't happen. Speaking with the boyfriend and explaining how he is influencing Sheryl could change his mind about the treatment and turn him into a valuable ally in Sheryl's recovery. I would then talk to her parents to make sure they fully understand the situation and ask them for their support in Sheryl's treatment, something that they have already said they support. After that, I would talk to Sheryl herself. With the help of her family and hopefully her boyfriend, I would explain to her the effects of what she is doing on the baby and also explain the treatment that I would use to help her with the disorder. The treatment would first be partial hospitalization, where Sheryl would go to a hospital in the day to receive treatment and then go to her parent's home so that she would be constantly supported through the first stages of her recovery. If her condition improved, I would switch to outpatient care and, with the help of a health care team of doctors, nutritionists, and therapists, aid her in transitioning back into her normal life without the eating disorder. These steps would overcome the hormones, due to the pregnancy, that may have also played a role in the development of Sheryl's anorexia. The key part of this plan is Sheryl's boyfriend, who may be the main source of Sheryl's stress and the reason the severity of Sheryl's condition suddenly increased. Turning him into an ally would alleviate stress and help Sheryl recover without having to resort to extremes such as discharge or involuntary treatment.

M.F. - Richland High School

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11.30.08

If I were Sheryl's doctor I would suggest she seek further medical attention such as psychiatric care and/or a dietician. I would admit her into the hospital so that she could be monitored 24/7. I would also warn her of all the complications of not following my direction. She could lose the baby and is endangering her own life. If the baby should die, she would be prosecuted because she knowingly put the baby's life at risk. No, it is not ethical to discharge her for not following directions. I could simply recommend another obstetrician but should she refuse to go to someone else, I would continue to counsel her in the right direction. This situation warrants involuntary psychiatric hospitalization. She knows the ramifications of her actions and if she is persistent with putting a child's life in danger she obviously has mental issues.

R.S. - Aledo High School Anatomy

11.30.08

Since the patient has a history of binge eating, purging, and abusing diet pills and laxatives, I would take the initiative and admit her into the psychiatric hospital. The most important thing now is the safety of her unborn child. If the patient was informed of the dangerous and fatal risks she is putting herself through as well as her child, there is no reason to let her continue the route she is taking. She has ignored my medical advice, therefore, that simple gesture informs me that she is incapable of taking care of herself. Taking legal action is drastic yet dire, because if the baby dies I would be held accountable for. It's the safest thing for not only her health but also her child's.

J.C. Aledo High School, Anatomy

11.30.08

If I was Sheryl's Physician, I would take the steps to hospitalize her under a court order. While some believe this would be a violation of the cases right, I believe it would be at her and the unborn child's best interest, with her unsteady eating habits, it would be best for her to be under a physician's care to make sure she cannot harm the baby. Sheryl is choosing to ignore the medical opinions even though this could harm both of them. She needs to be sat down and told that if she keeps doing what she is doing, it can cause death to the baby and she can be charged with murder, according to the Texas Penal code.

Women with anorexia nervosa are at a higher risk of complications during pregnancy, and ovulatory dysfunction is more common because serum gonadotropin levels are sometimes undetectable. Symptoms of having anorexia nervosa while pregnant include bloated abdomen, vomiting, fatigue, and the conception detections often delayed. So I believe this unborn child could be in great danger and Sheryl should be under watch of a physician with counseling, a strict, and a more enforced treatment.

L.C. -Aubrey H.S. Anatomy and Physiology

11.30.08

If I were Sheryl's physician, I would not discharge her as my patient because that would be unethical. I would also be reluctant to hospitalize anyone against their will under most circumstances. I would encourage Sheryl to see a dietitian to help her understand her nutritional needs and especially those of the developing fetus. Because she was 199 pounds at the onset of her pregnancy, she does not fit the profile of someone with anorexia nervosa. However, losing 30 pounds after becoming pregnant is probably not safe

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for her or her baby, and Sheryl needs to be informed about the damage she could be doing to her child. I would follow up frequently on this case, checking in daily. If Sheryl refuses to comply after being informed of all the risks, I would refer her to a psychiatrist; I would have Sheryl hospitalized only as a last resort.

L.P. - Aledo High School, Anatomy and Physiology

11.30.08

If I were Sheryl's physician, it would be a tough decision whether to get a court order and put her in a psychiatric hospital, or just try to stress to her the consequences of an anorexic pregnant woman. If Sheryl really cared for her baby like her boyfriend and family do she would go into the hospital willingly; but as stated in the case she cheats on her diet... so that shows she isn't willing to put her unborn baby first, so I would get a court order for the babies health even though forcing her to go to the hospital is violating individual rights, but I see nothing wrong with it since the case's mental condition is harmful to herself and her child. In my eyes the main issue is the baby's safety, and if she keeps making choices like that she will most likely kill her unborn and if she doesn't there is a good chance it will have some issues and that is unethical because the baby should not have to go through life with problems because of the decision its mother made.

Now if she does have the baby and its alive and healthy there's a good chance Sheryl will try to alter the babies weight and in doing this she could cause severe harm to the child by starving it or giving it diet pills because like herself she would think he/she is overweight. So not only is it harmful for her to be pregnant in her condition it's harmful for her to raise that baby.

T.W. - Aubrey High School-Anatomy and Physiology

11.30.08

If I were Sheryl's physician, I would consider to give her outpatient treatment and I would also suggest that she seeks out a psychiatric hospital to encourage her to learn about her disorder and see the consequences of it. I would leave the decision to her if she wanted to go to a hospital or not; however, if she continues to not comply with the doctor's orders I would take the steps to hospitalize her under a court order. I would do this for her safety and for the safety of her unborn child. Her disorder causes her distress as well as her unborn child, and does not only affect her health but also the unborn child's health. The disorder could possibly cause her to have a miscarriage. By placing her in a hospital the chances increase for her to eat better for the health of both her and her child. She would have the freedom of choice to do as she wants as long as she follows the doctor's orders. Because Sheryl is an anorexic pregnant woman she causes much concern for her and her baby because her disorder could cause her to not feed her child right and cause it to have the same disorder. In such cases, the child should be removed which might cause more concern for Sheryl because she lost her child.

J.T. - Aubrey H.S. Anatomy & Physiology

11.30.08

In my opinion, it is a doctor's responsibility to make sure a patient takes care of themselves. Since Sheryl has not been taking care of herself or her baby I would suggest that she go into a hospital. If she wouldn't then I would take steps to hospitalize her under a court order. I feel this way because I know that if I were in Sheryl's situation I would want someone to help me in any way that they could.

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A.S.

11.30.08

If I were Sheryl's physician I would offer her outpatient treatment, with education and counseling. I do not believe it is right to hospitalize someone with a mental condition against their will. Even though she might face charges for endangerment of her child, it is not her fault she has this mental condition. If she does not want help she will never get over her problem until she is ready to accept it and get treatment. Forcing someone into hospitalization is not the right thing to do, offering her information and counseling is what needs to be done. If she refuses the help it is her own fault and her doctor should not be charged with anything as long as he/or she offered her help. With education and counseling she should realize what she is doing is not only harming her but it is harming her child. She is not all that thin considering at the beginning of her pregnancy she was 199 pounds at only 5'4", thirty pounds is a lot of weight to lose especially during pregnancy when the body is supposed to do the opposite and gaining weight. Taking this into consideration I believe she needs help, but it should not be forced upon her.

S.V. - Aledo High School, Anatomy and Physiology

11.30.08

If I were Sheryl's doctor, I would sit her down and reassure her of the harm she is doing to her baby. I would tell her about all of the risk she is taking, and would make sure she completely understood. I would suggest outpatient treatment and therapy sessions to attend, and weekly checkups to make sure she is following the meal plan 100%. I would also give her the option of moving in with her parents so they could supervise her and monitor her food intake. I would then explain to her that if she did not follow these steps, or agree to abide by these rules completely, I would hospitalize her under a court law. It would not be ethical to discharge her, and I don't think I would want to, either. However, if she told me she was going to switch doctors because of my "threat" to hospitalize her, I don't think I would try to convince her to remain as my patient. I would, however, talk to her new doctor, and tell them about everything in advance.

11.30.08

If I were Sheryl's physician I would not leave her alone to deal with the problem because obviously she hasn't, however I don't think the situation is at the level of LEGAL intervention that requires a court order. I would advise Sheryl on outpatient treatment programs that educate you and offer counseling for anorexia pregnant women. I would also advise the family and boyfriend on ways to help Sheryl with her eating, but not by forcing her. If this method DIDN'T work then and only then would I resort to getting a court order and hospitalization.

M.F.-Richland High School- Biology

11.30.08

If I were Sheryl's physician, I would first recommend outpatient treatment for her eating disorder. If she did not comply, then I would appeal to her family to encourage her into an inpatient treatment program. Even though her family has offered to monitor herself care, it doesn't sound like Sheryl is committed to taking better care of her. As a last resort, I would encourage her family to get a court order for her hospitalization. A psychiatric hospital might not be the place for her, but an inpatient eating disorder clinic might help address the problems she faces.

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L.E. - Aledo High School, Anatomy

11.30.08

If I was Sheryl's physician, I would not want to automatically make her begin treatments to eat. At first I would give her the information for the causes of her actions. Without eating she is endangering the baby of nutrients that it needs to grow. Also, taking pills to help lose weight may cause mental damage to the baby. After monitoring the baby and the mother for a few weeks, if the condition stays the same, I would be forced to take action. Because the baby is my patient as well as the mother is, so it is my job to keep them both alive and healthy. So I would get a court order that allows me to keep Sheryl in the hospital and force her to eat. I would give her injections of nutrients to help her and the baby remains healthy until the baby is fully developed and is no longer in my care.

JY, Aledo HS, Anatomy

11.30.08

If I was Sheryl's physician I would offer her help outside of the hospital, such as counseling and more. And I would also discuss with her the extreme danger she is putting on her unborn child. Not only is she voluntarily destroying her own health, but she is also threatening the health of the baby as well. After telling her what she needs to do in order for her baby's life to be secure, and her own, I would have her sign papers saying that she is either refusing or accepting my medical recommendations, so that if she did refuse them, I would have proof that she ignored her physicians advice for her safety and mine. I would keep checking up on her and the baby and constantly push her towards getting help and doing what is best.

Aledo HS, Anatomy

11.30.08

In my opinion, the only appropriate and ethical response to Sheryl's predicament would be to acquire a court order that would send her to a psychiatric hospital where her physical and mental health would be properly treated. It is obvious that Sheryl is mentally unstable and is endangering the life of her unborn child through her self-destructive actions. She is already well into her pregnancy, making the need to ensure the safety of her child that much more urgent. She has had her chance to discipline herself and act accordingly to her physician's orders, and clearly more professional advice will not persuade her to take care of herself and her baby. In short, the only way to ensure the safety of Sheryl and her child is to take the situation out of her hands; she is mentally ill and cannot be trusted to not make reckless decisions that could kill her and the baby she carries.

BB- Aledo High School Anatomy

11.30.08

As Sheryl's physician I would make note that there are a number of issues that need to be addressed. First I would need to consult with the obstetrician as to the health of the unborn child. This needs to be done at the same time as my evaluation of Sheryl. I believe that this situation warrants the treatment of Sheryl in a psychiatric hospital. I would ask first for voluntary compliance, if not then I would seek legal compliance.

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I think that Sheryl's problem can be addressed over a period of time and that this time will be best served in a psychiatric hospital with the help and support of her parents and/or boyfriend. Sheryl should stay there until the health of the baby is under control and/or the child is born.

M.R. - Aubrey High School-Anatomy & Physiology

11.30.08

If I was Sheryl's physician, I would explain to her the risks of the way she is handling her weight during her pregnancy. She is putting her baby and herself at great risk just to avoid being what she sees as fat. I would definitely refer her to a psychiatrist to have her evaluated. I would not hospitalize her under a court order, though, unless she continues to starve herself even after she knows what could happen. Although she is an adult and has her rights, she has no right to cause her baby harm just to make herself feel better. If she does not show signs of improvement, I would defiantly have her hospitalized under a court order to protect the baby. As her physician, I am responsible for her health and that of her baby, and by not taking necessary action to protect them I could be in serious legal trouble.

K.H., Aubrey High School, Anatomy & Physiology

11.30.08

If I was the woman's physician, I would first inform her and educate her on the dangers she is putting on herself, as well as her baby. If after knowing about this, she did nothing to change; I would then try to get a court order to hospitalize her because it is my job to keep both of them alive and healthy. In a case such as this, I believe it is ethical to hospitalize this woman because she can't even take care of herself, so how is she supposed to take care of a baby? She won't, even if she's educated on the subject because she's so focused on herself.

AH-Aledo High School Anatomy

11.30.08

The first thing I would do for Sheryl is I would offer her the outpatient treatment. I would have her come into my office and tell her all of the terrible things that she could do to her baby and everything that happen to her if the baby were to die because of her anorexia. I would then give her some brochures for nearby clinics. After she left I would call the clinics and let them know that she was coming and have them call me if she actually showed up. If she didn't show up within the next two weeks I would take more drastic measures and put her in the hospital under court order for a month or so, just so we could monitor her and the baby. I would then offer her the choice to stay or leave. I think staying in the hospital and having to be force fed would scare her enough to make her follow the meal plan that was set up at least until the end of her pregnancy. I would still make her come in more frequently for checkups and if I saw that she was losing weight again, I would put her back in the hospital until the baby was born.

B.F AHS Anatomy

11.30.08

If I were Sheryl's obstetrician I would offer her outpatient treatment, including education and counseling, but if no progress is seen, I would seek hospitalization by court order. As an obstetrician I would have an obligation to both the health of the mother and the well-being of the child, and to discharge this patient would be unethical. To ignore a pregnancy that presents

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potential danger to both mother and baby would be to ignore the responsibilities of my profession. To continue her eating habits as she has, Sheryl must understand that she risks not only her mental stability (she is at a higher risk for post-partum depression), but that she puts the child at a much higher risk for miscarriage. If she does not respond properly to the recommended treatment, forced hospitalization then must become a considerable option. Viability of the baby (the ability of the child to survive outside of the womb) is commonly placed when the fetus is 28 weeks gestational age, hitting the time when abortion is then illegal. Allowing a mother to continue to starve her child and potentially kill it in this way should not be allowed. Pro-life or pro-choice, neglect at this point in time is essentially turning a blind eye to a possible, though indirect, third-trimester abortion.

K. W. -Aledo High School, Anatomy & Physiology

11.30.08

Sheryl's physician's job is to provide her with help that keeps her healthy and safe; however, it is Sheryl's overall decision on what to do with her body. If I was in Sheryl's physician's position, I would give her as much advice as possible to make her want to take care of herself. I would give her all information possible on anorexia and consequences of it. Also I would strongly advise her to stay in a hospital or have special treatment. Overall, however, all I would do is recommend. I would not make a forced decision for her. As her physician it would not be my right to make her do something that she does not want to do, even if I feel that what she is doing is wrong.

My personal feelings on her choice to not seek higher treatment, is that she is being selfish. This is because it will most likely be her baby's life that is affected rather than her own. Because it is the baby's life at stake, I would not give up on Sheryl even if she doesn't follow the treatment recommendations. It is unethical to give up on somebody, especially if it isn't actually for them.

J.B.

11.30.08

Although some may argue that Sheryl being anorexic, while standing 5'4" weighing 169 pounds is no concern because she was already way over weight to begin with and she has already lost 30lbs, is no big problem. I would strongly disagree if I was her physician. With Sheryl being pregnant she should naturally gain weight and I would try to first explain this to her very sternly and provide to her factual information. If she continued to harm her body and the child she is carrying I would tell her to seek psychiatric care. If the psychiatric help did not phase Sheryl's harmful actions I would proceed to gain a court order to place her in a hospital to achieve what is best for her and ultimately her baby.

K.G. – Aledo High School, Anatomy and Physiology

11.29.08

If I were Sheryl's physician, I would strongly tell her to take my advice about her eating disorders. I would suggest going to the hospital. I would offer her outpatient treatment with education and counseling. If she decided not to follow any of my recommendations, I would try to explain to her the danger of her health and the baby's health because of her eating disorder. If she still neglected to follow instruction, I would ask her to sign papers saying that I had explained all of the dangers that come from a pregnancy with an eating disorder and to prove that I offered her outpatient treatment and hospitalization and she made the choice not to comply so I would not be liable for any damage done to the child. Ultimately, it is her choice whether or not she wants to

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take care of not only herself, but her child, she should be liable for how she decides to care for her child.

K.K. - Aledo High School, A&P class

11.26.08

If I were this woman's doctor, I would take the steps necessary to get a court order for her hospitalization. Anorexia nervosa is largely psychological and I would infer that her thinking processes are not what they should be when it comes to doing the right thing for her child. The child's health is most important and I would get a court order to have her hospitalized to keep herself and the baby healthy. If the baby is killed during or before the death, the doctor is liable so a court order would be necessary action. After the baby is born, I would refer the patient to a psychiatrist for the eating disorder.

T.M. Aledo High School