

INTERACTIVE CASE FOR FEBRUARY-MARCH 2003

(closed for comments)

You are the head of the ethics consult team of a large, metropolitan hospital. You have been asked for your advice about Baby John Doe, who was born 43 days ago.

Baby Doe's birth was premature and took place in a community hospital. Delivery was complicated by the baby's position, and during delivery he suffered several broken bones. The baby's Apgar scores (indicators of well-being) were very low and, after delivery, he was transferred to the Newborn Intensive Care Unit at your hospital.

Over the past 43 days, baby's health has deteriorated. He has severe lung problems and cannot breathe on his own so he is connected to a ventilator; he has serious bacterial and fungal infections throughout his body; his digestive system no longer works properly; and fluid is accumulating around his brain so his head is swelling. He is being kept alive with intravenous nutrition, antibiotics and narcotics for pain. He also requires frequent blood transfusions.

The medical team taking care of Baby Doe met with the family on several occasions to discuss the baby's condition. The team now believes that the baby has no chance for survival and will die within a few months no matter what action is taken. They discuss the hopelessness of further treatment with the family and recommend that life-support be removed. Nevertheless, the baby's 14 year old mother and other family members wish to continue all treatments.

The medical team asks your advice regarding what they should do. Should they continue treatments that they consider hopeless until the baby finally dies or should they stop the treatments against the family's wishes?

Dear Students,

Thank you for your thoughtful and interesting comments. We received responses from 115 of you representing 20 schools.

Thirty seven percent of you said you thought that in this case life support should be removed. Sixty three percent leaned towards continued life support, and many were quite explicit regarding their belief that the family should make the choice.

Here is what a professional ethicist who encounters these kinds of situations wrote about your comments and the case:

The case of Baby Doe challenges both our heart and our intellect. I find the student responses to the ethics dilemma impressive in their insight, touching upon issues of faith, suffering, medical certainty, physician vs. parental authority, and finances to name only a few. Some students strongly agreed that life sustaining treatment should be stopped even over the objection of the family. Others felt equally strongly that the family's wishes should be respected. Many students expressed positions in between.

From my perspective as a clinical ethicist, the discussion case is a classical example of what is called "medical futility." Some people believe that medical futility is too subjective and difficult to define; yet most experienced physicians think they know it when they see it. At the most basic level, futility may have more than one kind of characteristic. One type of futility concerns the situation where treatment cannot restore to the patient a quality of life that the patient believes is worth living. This type of futility is subjective and depends on the person's values and desires. Another type of futility concerns the situation where treatment cannot achieve its therapeutic goals, and this is the

more objective type of medical futility.

In the case of Baby Doe, ongoing life-sustaining treatment cannot reverse the underlying medical conditions. This baby may be kept alive in a good intensive care unit (ICU) for weeks or months, but the baby will not grow a new brain or digestive system. Although we do live in times referred to by songwriter and singer Paul Simon as "the age of miracles and wonders," this child cannot survive outside the ICU and will die in the ICU, no matter what the physicians do. In the meantime, the baby's life will be one of suffering that must be continually suppressed with narcotics. This is a baby unable to smile or show any joy.

The American Academy of Pediatrics Bioethics Committee encourages shared decisions between the treatment team and the family when making choices for critically ill newborns. The recommended ethical standard is "best interests" of the child. But it remains unclear what should be done when the parents and physicians do not agree upon what is in the best interests of the child. The Texas Legislature is in the process of refining a law that allows physicians to involve the hospital ethics committee in such cases. If the ethics committee agrees with the treating physician that ongoing treatment is futile or "medically inappropriate," then treatment may be withdrawn after following certain procedural steps, even over the objection of the family. If the family does not accept this decision, then they must either find a different hospital willing to provide treatment or petition a court to intervene. Those who favor this new law believe that it will allow physicians to focus on the medically appropriate course of action for their patients while lifting from the family the responsibility that they be the final decision-makers in every case, a responsibility that can be so burdensome.

Student Responses

04/03/03

The question here lies in whether the medical team or the family has the right to decide the babies fate. But the answer lies in the fact that neither have any right to take the life of someone other than their own. Ideally the baby itself should be given the right to choose whether to live or not. Unfortunately that is impossible. I side with the family not because they are related to the child, but because I believe that life itself is intrinsic. It is the utmost value. Even if the treatment is hopeless, the plug should never be pulled. The age of the mother is irrelevant. Neither the mother or the doctors have the right to deny someone life.

D.W.

Garland High School

03/31/03

In the case of Baby Doe I believe that the doctors should continue life support and what treatment they can until the family changes its mind or the baby dies. There is always hope that the baby will somehow make it through no matter how little the chance, and the family is the only one who has the right to give up on that chance. I believe that the choice is totally up to the family and the doctors should do their best to carry out the family's wishes.

C.T.

Garland High School

03/31/03

The case of Baby Doe is one which entails economic consequences and moral issue. Given the futility of the baby's survival, for the sake of conserving resources, it is reasonable to consider the option of stopping the treatment altogether. The money/time/labor, which are used up by the treatment, can be used to save someone's else life. From a moral/ethical point of view, however, it is not right for the doctors to even consider such options. The doctors should not pass judgement/opinion whether someone lives or dies and should try their best to administer care to the patient even in a grim, hopeless situation. The greatest length I would go toward such an action as a doctor would be to just inform the parents of Baby Doe about the circumstances. I believe that the doctors should continue the treatment for Baby Doe until he dies or the family wishes to stop the treatment.

03/31/03

This baby is a serious waste of hospital resources. Even if the infant does survive, he will most likely suffer from brain damage and severe problems that will make his way of life horrible. From the description of how they are keeping him alive, it is as if he is already dead. The family should be a bit more considerate about other patients in the hospital who have a chance of survival who need the medical staff, blood transfusions, and medicine more than this baby does. This may sound a bit calloused, but we can't have the consequences of an irresponsible 14-year-old clogging up our already-congested hospitals.

K.P.
Garland High School

03/31/03

If I were placed in the family's position, I would probably take the baby off life support. I believe that this is ultimately the most compassionate of the options presented, simply because the baby should not be forced to suffer if there is no possibility of recovery. However, acting as a doctor, I do not believe that I would have the right to end a life without the consent of the family. With only a few exceptions, a doctor's duties are limited to merely advising all those involved about the best course of action, and pursuing any action that they deem necessary. No doctor should have the authority to overrule a family's wishes, especially when confronted with a choice as dire as this.

P.V.
Garland High School

03/31/03

Considering the doctors cannot lawfully discontinue life-support for the child, narcotics can reduce the suffering of the child, and the reputation of medical opinion has not always been 100% encouraging, the wishes of the family should be fulfilled. No one can predict the fate of the child with absolute certainty. A medical miracle may result after a few weeks, even when the doctors consider it hopeless. Doctors have been proven wrong about these sorts of predictions, and even if they are right, at least no one can say they just gave up. When human life is involved, throwing in the towel shouldn't be an option.

C.B.
Garland High School

03/31/03

This is a very hard case but I have thought my answer out thoroughly and I think that first off this is not the hospital's child. This is the family's child-not to mention a 14 year old girls child. She has never experienced having a child and is so young that this is overwhelming for her in the first place-just having the child not to mention the complications that it is having. So what I'm trying to say is that the family should get their way in this situation because it is not the hospitals child nor permission to make that decision for the child. If the family doesn't just realize that there is really no hope in leaving the baby on the treatments but they still want to do it- well then they are suffering and not the hospital so let them suffer more if they want. Its their choice. So that's my opinion - I think you should let the family do what they want to do because its their child and if they want to keep him on the treatments and stuffer than so be it.

CDR

Lake Highlands Freshman Center

03/30/03

If the family is optimistic and willing to go forward with it, then you respect the family's wishes. But also on the other hand if the baby is not able to breathe on its own, why let it struggle on. Plus if the mother is only fourteen, does she really think that she can raise this baby correctly. That would mean getting a job hiring someone to babysit. There is a long list of things that the mother cannot do, that is, of course if the baby survives.

MN

03/30/03

I believe that the Medical Team should keep the Baby on life-support. The ultimate decision on whether or not the treatments should be stopped should be the family's decision. Even though the team believes that the baby has no chance for survival and will die within a few months, Doctors are not always correct. Miracles are very rare, but they do occur. The doctors may hold an unbiased opinion; however, the parents opinion should take precedence. The doctors' job should be to inform the family of the situation and their predictions so that the family can make an informed decision. The doctors' told the family all the information, and the family wants to keep the baby on all the treatments, so the doctors should honor the family's wishes.

03/30/03

This ethics case is a debate over the rights of the child and the rights of the parents. The parents probably do not know enough about medicine to be able to have a real educated opinion about whether the child will live or not so they should take some of the advice of the medical team. The only question is whether the parents should have their wish of keeping their child be granted, or whether the child should be able to just die peacefully (like any person would want to die). There is no argument otherwise, the medical team has to do what the family wants them to do. Not only is it the legal thing to do, it is also not ethical to take away someone elses life without the conesent of family, by anyone's standards.

R.M.

Garland High School

03/29/03

As the head of the ethics consult team, I must respect the family's wishes. Although it is not ethically possible for the baby to continue to live, the team is still not a 100% sure whether or not the baby will live or die. Unless there is a 100% chance of death, it is not right to stop treatments on a newborn and let the baby die. In any situation, the family should have the first say in things. The baby belongs to them and not the doctor, so if they wish to continue all treatments, then treatments should be continued.

03/29/03

First of all I would like to say that this baby's mother is the legal guardian of this baby and at age fourteen, she needs expert advice. If the baby is to live she probably will not be the sole person to take care of him. As far as family members wanting the intensive care life support to continue they need to consider that medically this baby is in pain and is suffering. This baby has no digestive system so it is not bonding with its' mother, the fluid is accumulating around his brain. If this were my child I would stop this torment immediately! Ethically or not this baby is suffering. Sometimes when it is time for a soul to leave this realm it needs to be set free.

03/29/03

I think it would be cruel to take a child of life-support no matter how bad their case is. They never know how the child will turn out if he would of been kept on life-support if they were to take him off. He might of just been having a rough time and will bounce back to normal the next week. No matter what will happen, the child should be allowed to live for as long as his body, not the doctors, will allow him to no matter what the cost. You can't put a price on the cost of life because it is priceless. The job of the hospital is to preserve life at any cost, even that of the antibiotics, medical supplies, and equipment used to keep him alive. He needs to be kept alive.

M. H.
Desoto H.S. Freshman Campus

03/29/03

Since the family still wishes for the baby to be on life support, I would think that it would be better to allow the baby to remain on life support. It would be better to follow the family's wishes until the baby reached a point in the future where the family was willing to give up and allow the baby to be taken off life support. While it may be a better idea to take the baby off life support as soon as it seems it will not recover, if the family does not want that, it would be best to allow the family to say their goodbyes and make their own decision. The family would be extremely upset if the baby was taken off of life support without their decision. For this situation, I would advise that the team wait until the family is willing to allow the baby to be taken off of life support before they do it.

J.S.
Garland High School

03/29/03

As the head of the ethics consult team of a large, metropolitan hospital, I would avoid legal technicalities by following the family's wishes. After all, the child belongs to them, not me. Ethically, if it was up to me, I would put the child out of its misery, and prescribe the 14 year old birth contraceptives before she ruins another life; although, I am sure that detail was thrown in to make the head of the ethics consult team sympathize less with the mother. The question simply comes

down to whether it is murder or not, similiar to the abortion controversy.

J.G.
Garland High School

03/28/03

The hospital should cease the futile treatment of the infant. The mother, age 14, clearly lacks the ability to make coherent decisions, especially those made in the best interest of the child. The child's treatment should stop at once, as all available resources have been exhausted and the child is in perpetual suffering. It is best for the hospital, the family, and most importantly, the child, to stop the treatment. The child's suffering must stop. I would go so far as to say that letting the baby live in such a dire and helpless circumstance, is inhumane and morally wrong. The mother needs to make more informed decisions in the future.

B.W.
Garland High School

03/28/03

I understand what the family is going through and feel that they should not give up. I believe that there is still a little hope for the survival of the little boy. Also, they should try with every strength that they have to try to save the little boy until it is a fact that there is no way for the boy to live. Miracles can come true and things might turn around for the family that is facing this tragedy.

Lake Highlands Freshman Center

03/28/03

We read and discussed the ethics case in my first period class. My students feel that the life support should continue. Only one person felt otherwise. He thought that it was somewhat cruel because each day the child will get worse. The parents will see that, and they might get discouraged from having another child. If another child comes in; what would happen to that child if it has a good chance of survival? The student felt like the first baby would take up a resource (life support machine) that someone else could use. Almost everyone else felt that by faith some miracle could happen. They wouldn't want to take that chance away from the first baby.

L. P.
W.E. Greiner Middle School

03/28/03

I believe that the family of the child should have the final say in the matters of the infant's life. Though it seems pointless to the doctors to continue treatment, no one can determine the fate of the child. Medical "miracles" are rare occurences but do happen. Also, if this is an issue of ethics, the family's opinion is more important than that of the doctors. The doctors should let them know how serious the situation really is to make it easier for the family to cope with the loss.

I.D.
Lake Highlands Freshman Center

03/27/03

The medical team cannot ethically keep the baby on life-support because he is suffering; however, to answer the question, the medical team must continue treatments until the baby dies even though the his condition is dire. If the baby were to die, then the team could see that they have absolutely exhausted all sources. If they were to stop the treatments, then they would never know if the baby would have survived. The team would only be left with statistics and assumptions. The doctors are simply working for the family, and the family has the ultimate right to make the decision about the baby's life. If the medical team were to stop treatment, then that action would be equivalent to murdering the baby since the family did not give prior consent. The process of sustain

E.V.
Garland High School

03/27/03

I think that no matter how bad the chance for the baby to live are I think you should keep trying. I mean miracles happen, after another month he could be getting better, but if you were to stop the treatment you would never know if the baby would still live or not.

RPW
DHS freshman center

03/27/03

This is a very hard decision to make. Personally I am torn between religion and science. Science is telling me that there is no hope for the little baby, but my heart is telling me don't give up on her, because miracles are always occurring. So I am going to go with what I think is right. That is letting the baby stay on life support, because I believe that the baby can make a turn around. There is always hope.

TH

03/27/03

I believe they should keep going until the baby is no longer alive. I think that you should not give up and especially if that is the family's wish.

LR
REL

03/27/03

I think they should stop treatments against the family's wishes. It is the best thing for the baby, even though the family may be upset. It is suffering, and everyday it gets worse and is costing more not only for the parents but for the hospital. There is no reason for that baby to live. On top of that, the mother is only 14 and doesn't need such a responsibility.

KF
REL

03/27/03

I think they should stop the treatments because the baby has so many problems, that all it is doing is suffering. It is best for the parents to agree with the doctor for the sake of the baby. At first it may be hard, but in the long run it would be the best thing to do.

AM
REL

03/27/03

At this point I think it's important to think about how much this baby is suffering, and make a decision from these observations. The baby does belong to the family, so their wishes should be recognized. Above all, I would have to say the baby's well being is the most important case on hand.

JG
REL

03/27/03

I believe that the doctors have done everything humanly possible to save this baby's life. Complications with the birth caused these problems and there is nothing more they can do. I believe that it is inhumane to allow this baby to continue suffering. The hydrocephalus will only continue to get worse. This can cause permanent brain damage. The mother is still a child herself and is very immature and does not regard this situation as a mature mother but instead as an emotional young girl. Who only knows how much she suffered and wants something to show from it. She is not considering the best for the child.

KM

03/26/03

Usually, I think the decision should be entirely up to the parents and family. Miracles can not happen without hope, and doctors should always hope for the best. This baby is suffering, with little hope. Keeping the baby alive is like simply cruelty. I would let the family have a say, but I would very strongly suggest cutting the life support. There is no way to comfort the baby and it would be less painful than watching him suffer until his death. Miracles don't happen all the time.

03/26/03

If I was in the ethics advisor position, I would follow the family's wishes. It is not the ethics advisor's job to make the decision for the family and do what they think is right but instead, their job is to only inform and suggest to the family what will be best. If they were to override the family's decision it will not be morally correct. Although, the baby's chance of surviving are very slim, there is still a slim chance that the baby can come out of his unhealthy state.

J.D.R.
DHS Freshman Campus

03/26/03

First and foremost, the will and consent of the family must be obtained if you want to take the baby off life support. There is (not that i know of) no place where a doctor or ethics consultant can overrule the family's wishes. The will of the family must be upheld. However, in this case, the mother of the baby is fourteen yrs. old. At her age, should she not be TOLD what to do instead of be given CHOICES? Many teens that have babies may not know exactly what is best for the baby. If it is time, then there is nothing you can really do, you are just delaying the inevitable. If you believe in God and trust that he is the giver of life itself, why do you not see & want his wishes, which is obviously to take the baby back. With the babies declining health you must look at the bigger "pay-off" situation as well. When there is nothing that can be done to ultimately keep the baby alive, should we not waste the money, room, and effort on her and give it to other babies who still have the chance of life? The nutrients and blood transfusions could be sent to other people who may have the choice of life or death. I believe this situation is most upsetting because in a case where the baby should be taken off life support, the parents are so ignorant that they dont see what is actually good for the baby. Death is the best option. Im sorry, its not always what you want to hear. But why put yourself through denial, THE BABY IS NOT GOING TO GET BETTER. I also believe you must always look at the case in its entirety, the baby is dying and the parents don't know what they are doing. The decision should be put in the hands of someone who has the wisdom to handle it. The problem with the legal system is that it more concerned with rights instead of lives.

Trj
Longview Highschool

03/26/03

This is really painful for the baby to be going through all of this treatment and medical work, when there is no hope for survival. If I was the doctor, I would strongly suggest to the family that the baby is just going through more pain by keeping the treatments going, and that they should shut off the life support. Even though that is what is best for the baby, you have to respect what the family's wishes. The doctor may feel strongly one way or another, but they don't have a place to shut off the life support without the family's agreement.

MDB
DeSoto Freshman Campus

03/26/03

I think that the medical team involved with baby John Doe should follow the directions of the baby's family. It'd be cruel to end anyone's life because statistics show that they wouldn't live for much longer. There have been many times when doctors, even specialists, have been wrong about how long someone will live with their complications. If the medical team went behind the baby's family back they'd be sewed for sure not to mention that that is against the policy of hospitals. They should keep going with what the baby's family says.

B.P.
Longview High School

03/26/03

I think that even though they are hurting the child by letting him live through his pain, they should respect the parents and the family members and respect their wishes. Killing this baby could severely hurt the parents by not having the trust of their doctor. The parents should be there when the baby dies of natural causes, its ultimately their decision. This is a very weird case in which I would be inclined to say pull the plug on the baby, but I would want the respect from the parents if I were thier doctor. Sometimes in a person's life they are faced with hard decisions, this is one of the times. In this case the best thing to do is to let the parent decide on what the doctor should do. Even though they came to me for my advice, I would be forced to tell them to let the parents decide.

J.A.
Desoto Freshamn Campus

03/25/03

like people always say" the doctor knows best". The doctor is the one who has been through college and has all the knowledge. Though im sure the family would like to keep their pride and joy alive and hope for a miracle it is unnecessary, if they really love this child, they would stop the pain it is going trough and let it die now before things get worse and it dies suddenly and sadly. Keeping the baby alive is pointless all that it is doing is suffering. taking the baby of of life support is the best solution. Not to mentio that the mother is 14 years old and is a baby herself, maybe this is her sign that g0d gave her ONE MORE CHANCE. regardless of what the family wishes ..the doctors should do what is the most logical thing.

V.N.
Desoto Freshman Campus

03/25/03

In this case, although doctors are generally encouraged to comply with the family's wishes, the doctors should take the baby off life support. The baby has obviously been kept artificially alive for over two months, and most likely it has already suffered greatly. The money spent on the baby's treatment could be better spent in other places, and because there is no chance for improvement the hospital should not ethically prolong the child's suffering. As for the decision of the mother...mothers and family members are generally too emotionally attached to make clear coherent decisions, not to mention the mother of the child is 14 (not even old enough to drive mind you), a child herself, and she therefore doesn't have as much of a capacity to make critical decision making. The family of the baby should most definitely be informed and given another chance to make the decision on their own, but ultimately it would be in the best interests of the hospital, the family, and most importantly the suffering baby for the baby to die naturally without artificial life support.

KMW
Garland High School

03/25/03

As the head of the ethics consult team I would advice the family of Baby John Doe to stop treatments and the suffering of the poor child. The child is obviously in very poor condition and the family of the child need to be explained to about how terrible the condition really is. However, if they still would like to keep him on the treatments I would let them, because it is really their decision, and

their child.

A.H.
Med High

03/25/03

Unless told by the family, the doctor's should not cut off life-support. That would be devastating for the family and major trouble for the doctors and a bad name for the hospital. If the doctor's were to cut life-support and the baby were to die, the family would wonder "my baby could have lived". On the otherhand, if the doctors would continue the life-support and treatments, the family would have some hope and time to pray that the baby will live and the mother would get to take care of her baby. The doctor's should consider that maybe there could be a miracle and the Baby Doe would be with his mother!

N.E.
Lake Highlands Freshman center

03/25/03

The baby seems not to be getting any better, yet supplies keep being used it. This is a waste of many and supplies. They baby is going to pass away regardless what they try to do to stop it. All the baby's treatments should be stopped. I know the family says that they want the baby to stay on the treatments but they fail to relize that there are other people out there that can be using the supplies that the baby is getting, and these people have chance to live. Yet i would have to go with what the family wants to do since it is there child, but i will be constantly reminding of what they are doing. The child will pass away soon so why let the baby go through all of this.

J.R.
Desoto Freshman Campus

03/25/03

As an ethics advisor, I would have to ask the medical team to respect the family's wishes. Although they most likely do not know much about the condition of the baby (also putting into consideration that the mother is only 14 years-old), the family still has a right to keep the baby on life support. Or at least as long as they can pay for the medical treatment. Even with this right that the family has, I would still advise them to let the baby go instead of continuing on with the ordeal.

A.N.
Garland High School

03/24/03

This is nothing less than cruelty. You have to consider that by continuing to put the baby through this ordeal it is doing nothing but hurting the baby. Also you have to look at the fact that by continuing to waste the supplies on a hopeless baby you are limiting the supplies to the other cases that are similar. Why waste time on a baby who obviously has no chance when you can use the supplies to help a baby who has a chance. If i was in the position of authority in this cas i would have to go ahead and go along with the treatments considering the fact that tis is my job. However, I would have to let the family know that I am totally against it and i would try my best to differ their decision.

M.G.

DeSoto Freshman Campus

03/24/03

In this country, as far as I know, the hospital cannot "pull the plug" without the person's or family's consent -- the family's consent, in this case, as the baby is too young to make those decisions. So the question is somewhat irrelevant, as the medical team could be prosecuted/sued (depending on what legislation this situation falls under) if they did stop treatments without the family's consent. Ignoring this inconsistency, I believe it is ethical to stop life support in a hopeless case such as this even without the consent of the family, but I do not think the doctors should be allowed to stop the intravenous narcotics. Doing so would not only kill the baby but would kill it painfully, and if nothing can be done to stop death, the medical staff is still obligated to ease the pain as much as possible. The family does not have the superior medical knowledge and, therefore, should not be allowed to have the final say in an instance such as this. Not only does this prolong a death unnecessarily, it in

J.T.
Garland High School

03/24/03

In my opinion the decision is not hard to make here. The doctors believe that leaving the baby alive any longer would be useless and at the most a waste of time. The parent and other family members are in agreement with leaving the baby on the "life-supporting" machines and treatments which it is currently on as long as possible. The doctors make most of the decisions when it comes to life and death. Any little obstacle in determining whether a person should live or die, rests in their hands, but there is always a time when the decision is left to the family members. In other words, this is one of them. If the mother and family members decide that praying for a miracle is an option, then let it be. Last September my grandma got very ill. They had her on ventilators and many other treatments I now nothing of. Days later after much treatment the doctors asked my parents, aunts and other family members what we would like done. They told us she had very little to no chance of surviving and if they took her off the machines she would die automatically. We took our chances and said we would like to stick it out as long as possible. In the end she did not live but I still believe that taking away our opinion of choice would have been wrong. So in conclusion I leave you with that the baby should be kept alive until the family desires, it gets better or dies.

BMC
DHS Freshmen Campus

03/24/03

As the head of a ethics consult team, I would have to say stay with the family's wishes. Something can always pop up and it could heal the baby. Miracles do happen. It would be totally disrespectful to not go with the family's wishes. They have the decision to make. We are just supposed to give them options and give them the odds of how long the baby is going to live at this rate. The hospital and the teams should have no say. Of course they should have their opinions, but they just need to do their job and do what they are told. So in my opinion, I would have to say, stay with the family's wishes.

C.I.
DeSoto High School

03/24/03

First you must think of what is best for the baby. Should he have to suffer and then end up dieing in the end. But on the other hand that isnt your baby and you must respect the families wishes. They are having a hard enough time with it as it is. But I would say it probably isnt best to keep life support on the baby since the mother is only fourteen and probably doesnt have the money to keep giving the baby treatments. It is the most logical decision and even though the family has to go on with life the baby can now live in peice for the first time in his life.

03/23/03

The team of doctors only believes that the treatments will not help, who are they to decide the baby's destiny? If the parents believe that the child will survive, though it is not the treatments that might help in the long run, the medications may help to sustain the infant while his spirituality boosts him through the pain that he must be going through. If the family's faith is strong enough that they believe that whatever they worship or whatever they believe in will be there and will help their new born through this sufferage, I believe they have the power to hand over the fate of their young John Doe.

C.O.
Lake Highlands Freshman Center

03/23/03

God is the giver of life and I do think that we should do everything within our power to sustain and appreciate life. However after saying that, this is not life. The baby will never get better, the young parent will probably be paying this bill off for the rest of her life and the child is in such pain. The girl is only 14 years old. Who is helping her make this kind of decision? Are there counselor there to assist. Does she have parents helping her? I can imagine the suffering the baby and the family is going through. At a time like this, it is difficult to think clearly. I will not say what I would do in this situation, because clearly, I do not know this for a fact. On the other hand, I would hope that a parent would do what is best for the child and belabor the pain and suffering. Unfortunately, I do think that society and the doctors can not make that decision. I do not believe that anyone other than the parent should be given the choice about their baby. They were old enough to have the child. I would expect that there would be programs in place to assist young or old parents in choices such as these.

RWW
DBU

03/21/03

Though I agree with the consultants' decision to take Baby Doe off of life-support, the ultimate decision is up to the family. If the team were to remove life support without the family's consent, they could have a major law-suit on their hands. The procedures the baby is receiving have got to be expensive however, and unless the family has a lot of money, eventually they will no longer be able to pay for them. I think the family should still see counseling provided by the hospital, and the hospital should continue to remind them of their options.

J.W.
LHFC

03/20/03

As the head of the ethics consult team, you have to ask yourself one question: Is it ethical to keep this baby alive? No, it is not. Despite the family's wishes, there is no reason to believe that the baby will survive. To force him to live is to deny his quality of life. Although, this is the best choice for the baby, his family has the final decision, and you must respect their wants. You would have to tell the medical team to listen to the baby's family's wishes and pray that he will pass peacefully.

TP
Garland High School

03/19/03

This is a hard decision to make. I want to say just take the baby off of life support because the outcome will be death either way. But, it is the family's decision in my eyes. It's their baby not the hospitals so any final decision of the child's fatality must lay in the hands of the 14 year old mother and the rest of her family. As heart breaking as it is, prolonging the process and watching the baby's health further deteriorate, as long the family's minds are made up you must respect their wishes.

DAT
DHS

03/19/03

What I think should be done is, I believe that the parents and family members who are pumping all the money into keeping this baby alive is right. Honesty not all doctors are right when they are predicting what's wrong with their baby. What I think should happen is I think that the medical team should not take this baby off of life support, but to rather wait longer just to see if this baby makes a miraculous turn around.

JMM
Desoto High School

03/19/03

This is a decision that must not be taken lightly. The child is most likely not going to live and even if it does it's life will be filled with hospital visits and staying in a bed for long periods of time. This is not a life worth living. Also the cost of life support and the treatment this baby is going through and will go through we cost a lot of money. This much money doesn't grow on trees, and if the parents are not wealthy they will have trouble paying for all this, not including the cost of all the necessities such as a bed and clothes. But the most important fact to remember is that these people are the baby's parents and they alone how a say on what happens. The doctors may only give ideas and suggestions and give their opinion. Even though this baby probably should be taken off life support and allowed to pass on, it would, in doing so, according to the law, committing murder. Murder is not something a doctor wa

HN
HARWOOD JR. HIGH

03/19/03

The family's decision should be respected. Although the prognosis is not good, the doctors should not simply override the opinions of the baby's family. As long as the finances are provided and the family wishes to keep the child on life support, in my opinion there is no question that the baby should continue to live. The baby will probably die soon because of his poor condition. The family should be given the opportunity to deal with their child living on the machines and if they decide that it is time to take the baby off of life support, then that wish can be granted. If the baby has a minor chance of living and eventually comes out of his bad state, then that would be wonderful.

ES

Garland High School

03/19/03

As the ethics advisor, I would have to tell them to obey the family's wishes. Although the treatment is hopeless, if the family can pay for the treatment, it is out of the medical team's hands. The decision would depend upon the monetary costs to the hospital. If the family cannot pay, then the hospital has sufficient justification for no longer providing the treatment; otherwise, the family's wishes must be followed, despite the medical team's emotional feelings about the situation. I would encourage the family to let the child die before the pain is such that the narcotics no longer help the baby, but it will ultimately be their decision.

A.Y.

Garland High School

03/18/03

This isn't an easy issue to resolve. There are obvious moral and economic conflicts presented. One might say that no human has the right to take the life of another's, another person might say that forcing the baby to suffer on the hopes that the miracle of modern technology will pull through at the last second. The family is willing to throw away a fortune for a premature, near-death baby who is expected to live for no more than a few more months, regardless of any actions taken by the medical team. As noble as it may be, is it logical? What about the mother's future? She's only 14 years old and that money could be used to help her straighten up her life and maybe get her to a decent college. A baby's life is as important as any full grown adults, maybe even more important. In my opinion, the medical doctors have given their opinion but it is the family's choice whether they continue to pay hundreds of dollars a day for life support, or if they have the baby put out of its misery. From the beginning, at the baby's birth, there were severe complications, and as the doctors continued to treat this 43 day old child, the situation grew worse. Try to imagine the pain the child is going through, the suffering in between the long doses of antibiotics and narcotics. Baby's feel pain too. If I were suffering from severe lung problems, serious viral and bacterial infections, digestive problems, and my head was swelling from all of the liquid accumulating in it, and on top of all of that, I had a life expectancy of a few more months, I would want to be put out of my suffering too. If the 14 year old mom and her family want to spend their personal fortune hoping for a miracle and to watch their baby suffer, that is their decision and the doctors, as painful as it may be to both them and the baby, must carry out the family's wishes.

JM

Harwood Jr High

03/18/03

I think that it is up to the family. If they have the money to afford to keep the baby on life-support, then let them do it. And, what if by some miracle, the baby survives? Wouldn't that be wonderful? I think that the choice is up to the family...the doctors should tell them the facts and let the family decide for themselves. The baby is part of their family, after all.

AG
LHFC

03/18/03

Although there is little chance that the baby will survive, the family wants to continue treatments, and that wish should be respected. Even if the baby will probably only live a few more months, the wish should be respected. Apparently the mother, who is incredibly young, went through a lot of emotional and physical pain to birth this child, and she obviously was prepared to raise this child since there are so many other options these days that come along with an unwanted/unexpected pregnancy. Since she was prepared to sacrifice so many areas of her life, it seems only fair that she be allowed to have her child kept alive as long as possible.

LW
DHS

03/18/03

I feel that it should be the family's decision on where or not the treatment should stop for Baby John Doe. Even if the treatment is considered hopeless, the mother and family probably see a hint of hope and it would be wrong to snatch away that feeling. Since the mother is only 14, her life has probably been extremely stressful over the past 11 months. Just to terminate treatment would add an unbelievable feeling of guilt and just add to the stress. In conclusion, it should be left up to the family about Baby John Doe's situation.

B

03/18/03

I think that the medical team should continue to keep the child alive, per the family's request. An untimely death of a child is very tough for any family to deal with. Despite the fact that the child's condition might deteriorate, the medical professionals should honor the family's request. Miracles happen everyday and God willing one can happen to this child also. I couldn't imagine being the parent and knowing that I tried to do everything that I could to save my child, and despite my request the doctors, that I trust, go against me and ultimately end the life of my child. Sometimes the medical community forgets that they aren't God and some things need to run their course, no matter what the charts say.

BW
DBU

03/17/03

Being a human being, many internal feelings surge and clash within me. Is it fair to rob a child of his life? But even if I chose to keep this Baby John Doe alive for as long as I can, what life would that entail? Would the quality be worth it?

This Baby John Doe is not expected to pull through no matter what road is taken and he is on constant painkillers and life support. Do I pity the child? With every fiber of my being, but I am unable to ask him what his wish is. So, inevitably, the choice is left up to an official, and for the time being that is me. Personally, I would first talk it out with the family of the child once again to get them down to my level and view both roads of this warped highway of decision. I would sternly stress the life expected of their child. If their decision stands to keep their son or grandchild, as it may be, alive I think I would have to respect that decision.

C.G.

Harwood Junior High School

03/17/03

First of all, I think that it is in one way selfish for the mother of the baby to keep the him on life support. He is most likely going to die anyway, and the baby is obviously experiencing extreme pain. But, what if the baby did happen to survive? If the hospital took him off of life support, the baby's survival would be impossible. Also, since the mother is only 14 and legally considered a minor, there should also be some other person that could speak or act for her, like her guardians. Ultimately, the baby does belong to the mother, and not to the hospital, so it should be her decision no matter how hopeless the case is.

03/17/03

If I was the mother of this baby or a family member, I would think this whole situation is in God's hands. His plan is the master plan. So, to know that God is in control, I would pray to Him for me to make the right decision. The medical team should listen to the family. After all it isn't their baby and they should know the consequences or problems the baby would go through if he continues the treatments.

A.

LHFC

03/17/03

This is a very difficult subject to debate. On one hand you have the rights of the patient, who shouldn't have to suffer. And on the other hand you have the rights of the parents, who if they choose can use whatever money they have to keep their child alive. If I was in the parents position, and there was no in saving my child, I would let my child die peacefully instead of the prolonged pain and suffering. But doctors cannot go against the wishes of the parents. So I believe that the doctors should follow the instructions of the parents and continue the treatment.

J.A.

Garland High School

03/17/03

It is the family's decision whether or not to keep the baby on life support. There will be lots of expenses and excruciating psychological pain, but the medical team is also responsible for helping others. There have been many cases where doctors have said that a person will not make it, especially with Cancer cases, and a miraculous thing has happened.... they did! So possibly, just maybe, the baby could survive all that damage, or maybe it will go. Believing in God as I do, I wish that the medical team would let God decide, and not just make a hasty decision on percentages. The family is the one who has to with go the trauma.

M.D.R.
Martin H.S.

03/16/03

Although keeping the baby alive may cost money that the hospital sees as unneeded, it is ultimately the family's decision to either cut the life support or keep the life support for the baby. In situations where adults are on life support it is generally the family's decision when to quit providing the injured person with the life support, so I think that the family should make the decision in this case as well. Just because the person in this situation is a baby and not a grown adult, the same basic rules should apply. The hospital should respect the family's wishes to keep the baby alive, because even if they do not believe that the baby will live, there is always that chance that a miracle could occur, and if the family wants to give the baby a chance to live, then the hospital should as well. In the end, if the baby dies, then at least the parents will know that they gave the baby a chance, and who knows, perhaps that baby will

B.P.
Garland High School

03/16/03

I would have to decide to uphold baby John Doe's family's wishes, even if the doctors have concluded the baby's survival is hopeless. Medical miracles do happen, and as long as the family of the baby is aware of and able to handle all the financial responsibilities I do not think it is up to the doctors to decide when to end the baby's life. Even though the mother is young and perhaps immature, it is her son and it should be her decision to let him go. Unless there was a 100% chance of death I don't think that I would feel confident enough to essentially kill a newborn; I would always wonder what if...? The doctors should make sure the family is well-informed about all aspects of the baby's continued treatment, including financial estimates, how much the baby is suffering, and chance of survival, but ultimately I think the decision is up to the family.

K.R.R.
Garland High School

03/15/03

I think the family should really think about what good for the baby by sayin that i think the doctors and nurses should take the little baby off of life support just because of the fact that they already know that the baby is going to die within 14 days so i mean also they would be saving the family alot of grife though this hard decision .So in my answer i say the doctors should first talk to the family once more then if they dont change there mind i say do what you gotta do.

DD

03/15/03

The doctors should follow the family's decision and have no right to go against it. The family members are the ones that have to live through the thought of what if he survived. It would basically be murder if they removed the life-support. Plus, doctors are never 100% sure with their diagnoses. In this case, how can they be positive that he will not live?

IB

PHS

03/11/03

Although Baby Does situation seems to be hopeless, it is the family's decision if he should be kept on life-support. It will cost money and possibly emotional pain seeing the baby struggling, but there is still a what if. What if Baby Doe lives? In this case, the money spent on the life-support would be completely worth it. But it really does not matter what the medical team thinks; they can only provide their opinion and the final decision is only the family's. So I think they should continue treatments that they consider hopeless.

CN

LHFC

03/10/03

In baby John Does case, life is a big and tricky issue. Should the medical team respect the choice of the family knowing that there is very little hope left or take matters into their own hands and stop the baby from suffering. I feel that the medical team should respect the families' opinion, because you can never give up in hope (especially hope for a love one). You can never stop praying and hoping that god has a plan for this bundle of joy. It is only right to continue in helping this child who cannot do anything to help himself. Would it be right to take the life of this poor innocent child? That would only be wrong, in the eyes of god, and it would be against the child's will. You can never give up to keeping anyone alive, the medical team should have only one choice: to make the life of baby Doe the best while th

JM

Med-High

03/08/03

If a really had to choose in this situation it would be some thing to pray about. If the family is a good family and they think they can handle the pain of losing the child then I'd pray and ask god to give them peace because this child doesnt deserve to be in the pain and I believe God would be able to take better care of him. But on the other hand, If they would want to try and wait for the miracle to happen. I would have to go with thier wishes. It's difficult to decide what to do. The worls tries to play god too much.

J.B.

NFHS

03/07/03

Even though the treatment is hopeless, and the baby has no chance of survival no matter what action is taken, he still has few months to live and the doctors have no right to take it away from him. It is a personal descison, and as long as his family member is ready to bear the financial consequences, the treatment should be continued.

KC

MHS

03/07/03

This would be a very tuff for me to decide. I believe any thing is possible through prayer and faith,

but you don't want the baby to suffer. I really believe that it would be best just to take the baby off life support because if the baby is on a venerator then the baby is probably already deaf because the venerator is keeping him alive. I hope everything turns out for the best.

B.N.
JTH

03/07/03

As stated by many of the readers, this is a difficult case. Being the son of a hospice nurse, I have often been schooled on such cases, and how they are handled. In this case, I feel the baby should be taken off life support only after a week or two, with permission of the family or not. However, the child's passing should be made as peaceful as possible. There is a line that must be drawn in such situations, and it is imperative that it's made clear the amount of pain the child is suffering. It is also wasteful to throw recourses into a case that is hopeless, when they could be used on a case that isn't.

T.S.
JTH

03/07/03

If the baby's mother was older then I would say let the mother decide. It is her baby and no matter what decision she makes she will have to deal with that decision for the rest of her life. But in this case the mother is only 14 years old and that is too young to be making life and death situations. The doctors shouldn't try to be God. God is the only person who can decide who lives or dies. If they go against the families wishes and take the baby off life support, then they could be sued for taking the families baby. So my opinion is to leave the baby on life support and let him die on his own. I do believe in miracles and if that baby was meant to walk this earth then God will make a way for that baby to live.

Z.W.
J.T.H

03/07/03

In baby John Does case, life is a big and tricky issue. Should the medical team respect the choice of the family knowing that there is very little hope left or take matters into their own hands and stop the baby from suffering. I feel that the medical team should respect the families' opinion, because you can never give up in hope (especially hope for a love one). You can never stop praying and hoping that god has a plan for this bundle of joy. It is only right to continue in helping this child who cannot do anything to help himself. Would it be right to take the life of this poor innocent child? That would only be wrong, in the eyes of god, and it would be against the child's will. You can never give up to keeping anyone alive, the medical team should have only one choice: to make the life of baby Doe the best while they can.

JM
Med-High

03/06/03

I believe the baby should be taken off the life support since obviously there is no current treatment for the baby to even have a fighting chance to live. Despite what the mother and the family thinks

to continue treatments, the baby is just suffering and prolonging the inevitable.

RLW
PHS

03/06/03

I think the life support machines should be turned off because that is what the patient stated in her living will. Does the doctor have the right to go against the patients wishes? Is it fair to the family who would like to bury her? The doctor should have discussed with the patient before she was going down hill, if she wanted to continue being on life support after there was no more hope for her to continue the experimental therapy.

C.F.
Naaman Forest High School

03/05/03

I believe that the baby's treatment should continue. It is not the doctor's call to take away treatment. If the family has hope and wishes for the treatment to continue then it should. It is only the doctors place to give them advice on whats best but the real decision is up to the family.

K.B.
J.J. Pearce High School

03/05/03

Whether or not to remove life support is always going to be a hard decision no matter the circumstances, but I believe it is a decision that should be made by the parents and/or spouse of the person in question. In this case it is the mother that the decision should fall on, but since she is a minor the responsibility defaults to her parents. The family has decided that they do not wish to remove life support, and their wishes should be carried out. It will always be better to know for sure that the baby would have died anyway, than to not continue treatment and never know. Miracle cases do occur and if life support is removed the family may never feel certain that they did the right thing, and it is important for them to be able to have closure.

K.H.
Wylie High School

03/05/03

This is a very difficult subject. My first comment would be to take the baby of life support, but when I look at the parents it is hard to say anything. I would probably let the baby die on its own. So the parents don't feel that their baby is taken away from them. This type of situation it is better to take life support from them because there is no way this baby will survive. Unless something miraculous happen.

D.H.
MacArthur High School

03/05/03

This is a difficult decision for all parties involved. At first I would say that if it is futile to continue to spend time, resources, and money on the treatment of a baby that has no chance of survival than

the "plug" should be pulled. Not only will this keep the tragedy from being an unbearable expense, but also will allow the mourning of the child to start. What it sounds like is the whole family keeps hope and faith that the baby will come across a miracle and survive when the doctors have no medical grounds for this to occur. At second glance, I see it from the family's perspective. If there is any small sliver of hope in this world they do not want to be responsible for the death of their little baby. As for me, being the head of the ethics department of the hospital taking care of this small child, I feel that we should respect the wishes of the family and at the same time make it clear what they are deciding, (the expense and the pain that the baby is going through.) Someone needs to talk straight to the family and they will make the right decision when the time is right for them.

M.R
M.H.S

03/05/03

I read the prompt to all of my freshman biology classes and their responses varied. Majority of my 2nd period were for keeping the baby's treatments going. They believed in 'miracles' and said that it could possibly lead to a medical breakthrough. My 3rd period class were almost split even. Majority of my 4th period class said that the medical team should end treatments and turn off the life support system that is basically keeping the baby alive. My 5th period came to the conclusion of keeping the baby on support for another month, and if there is no change or a change for the worse (if possible), then turn off support. I was intrigued at the many opinions and responses that I received. We had an interesting discussion in all of my classes.

A.M.S.
Grand Prairie High School 9th Grade Center

03/05/03

It is actually the baby's choice, but it cannot voice its opinion so it left up to the mother to choose. I know if I were the baby that I wouldn't want to live a prolonged life of pain because being kept alive with machines is not living. Having the baby live is just prolonging the pain that the family will suffer after the baby dies, and the mother will feel guilt that she let her baby suffer for so long. It is logical that keeping the baby alive will only cause emotional strain on the family and rationally cost the hospital money that could be used to save someone else who does have a chance of living a normal life.

C.T.
MHS

03/05/03

In the case of Baby Doe, it would probably be best for both the family and the baby if life support were taken away. The baby does not show any signs of improvement and it would be best if the child were to die peacefully and not suffer any more pain. The family could then start their grieving and healing process. But the mother of Baby Doe and its family does not choose to stop life support and their choice should be honored because it is their child, their family member's life that is at stake. I am merely commenting as a bystander and the decision should be made by someone closer to the baby. It is nice to have outsiders' opinions on the topic, but the final decision should be made by the family and if they choose to artificially prolong the baby's life with machines then it is their choice and the hospital should do as the family has asked.

A.T.

MHS

03/05/03

Though the chance of survival for Baby John Joe is very slim, the medical team should respect the family's decision. This decision is a personal decision that only can be made by the mother, even though she is only 14, and the family members. As long as the family is willing to bear the pain and suffering of an almost hopeless case and are willing to spend the money to keep the baby alive, then the treatments should be continued. The doctors might try to persuade the family member to reconsider their decision, but they should not disregard the family's wishes.

PF

MHS

03/04/03

In this case, the doctors should ensure the family's wishes are respected and make sure Baby John Doe's death is at least a painless one. Some may argue that after the effects of painkillers have worn off the baby will continue to suffer, and others may argue the fact that he is kept alive by a machine, drugs, and painkillers is an affront to human dignity that goes beyond physical suffering. Yet, one should remember how easy it is to extinguish a life and how hard it is to preserve one. Taking Baby John Doe off life support will lead him to face a possibly painful and agonizing death. For someone that unfortunately did not have the opportunity to experience life in its entirety, he does not deserve to breathe his last breath in pain. No decent human being should. Death is no recourse to unjustified suffering.

W.B.C.

MacArthur High School

03/04/03

Even though I cannot play God. Life has to end for Baby Doe and even do you have to suffer to live. Baby Doe has not lived life to its fullest potential and nor does he have the ability to. Each and everyday when his family comes in to see Baby Doe they would feel a sense of hopelessness for they cannot save Baby Doe. By taking Baby Doe out of life support the hospital will give his family a chance to move on with their life.

AM

MacArthur High School

03/04/03

In my opinion, Baby Doe should be kept alive. One of our rights as a person is the pursuit of life. If the doctors want to take away the baby from medication, they would be violating the baby's right and they would be going against his family's wishes. Though the mother is 14 yrs old, it is not the baby's fault. Others are saying that his mother is too young and the baby would ruin her life. But by killing baby Doe, they would be ruining his life and not giving him the right to at least try to live. He shouldn't pay for something his mother did. As stated he is in a lot of pain, but with research and technology these days, a medication that will cure him will be found in a matter of time. Miracles happen everyday. You just have to patient.

D.

Med High

03/03/03

The treatment for baby John Doe should be continued even though there are close to zero possibilities of his survival. I believe the decision should be taken by the family, rather than by the doctor's because every life is precious and there is always a chance of survival. I believe doctors should do everything that is possible for any patient's survival, even if it means struggling until the patient's death, unless the patient states otherwise.

R.S.

03/03/03

I think they should keep the treatments continuing. That is because this is a human life like anyone else. If they were to take this baby off of the treatment they would be killing a human just like the criminals do and go to prison for it. Would they like it if something were to happen to them and they were to go on life support and then taken off to let die? I would want that to happen to me.

S.A.

Navasota Jr. High

03/03/03

My response to this is that I believe that the family should let the doctors stop all the treatments. Maybe, the doctors could go against the family wishes. They should do this because the family shouldn't let or make the baby suffer. That is just wrong letting the treatment continue when mainly everyone knows the outcome.

03/03/03

It is the role of the medical team to provide care for baby Doe regardless of the family's economic situation and of the mother's young age. However, it is also their responsibility to clearly inform the family of the baby's condition and the suffering that prolonging life will bring. Stopping treatment without permission is outstepping the bounds of caretaker and advisor. Likely, the family will consent to removing life support when they come to terms with the fact that there is no chance for survival with any quality of life. I would advise the medical team to continue discussing with the family the realities of the baby's deteriorating health and to show them the futility of continuing life support, but above all, remain respectful of the family's wishes.

M.M.

MacArthur HS

03/02/03

No, they should not quit the treatments. The reason I say this is because the baby might have a chance to live. The doctors say that the baby is going to die, they don't know that they just say that. Why would they want the baby to die? That is not what hospitals are for, hospitals are supposed to have doctors that help people. If they do go against the family's word which was, do not stop taking treatments. Well if they do stop taking treatments, the family could sue the hospital. That would not be good on the hospital's reputation.

03/01/03

In the case of Baby Doe one must begin to think about the quality of life rather than the quantity. When an assigned medical team has already told you that nothing they can possibly do will keep

the baby alive, you need to decide at that point what type of life you want your baby to have while it still has one. A meaningless existence in a incubator is no life. While it is the families decision on what to do or what not to do you must keep in mind the money and the medical attention that is being taken away from someone who may have a chance at life.

No one wants to be told that there is nothing that can be done for their child or having the burden put upon them of what to do about the situation however, decisions must be made. It is in my opinion that the family should take the medical team's advice by ceasing life support and take the child home and give it the best life that it can possibly have under the circumstances, and give another life a chance.

02/28/03

In the case of Baby John Doe all aspects should be looked at. The familie in the end makes the ultaminate and final decision but the docters influence a great amount what that decision is. The baby being premature is a big factor in it's health state but other things like the infections and his digestive system failing makes it much worse. Giving the baby pain killers is a good idea but in the long run the pain killers will eventually ware off and it leaves the baby where it was when it got started. In my opinion what the familie's wishes are should be what is done. The mother had the baby and if she decides to fight for the baby's life till the end there is nothing wrong with that. But denieing the mother and familie of the baby the right to choose what they think is best for him or her is wrong and should not happen. We consider what docters say always right but sometimes they make mistakes as does everyone else. The baby will,

L.C.

Navasota Junior High School

02/27/03

On behalf of the entire ethics consult team I make the following case regarding the treatment of Baby Doe. The majority of us felt the treatment should be stopped. The reasons that led to this conclusion were based upon the current and worsening condition of the baby, the futility of continued treatment and the very grim outlook of the baby's future should the baby survive.

However, the minority argument was very compelling and hard to ignore. This group felt that life is precious and must be preserved at all cost with maximum effort. They believe prayer and hope can bring about miraculous results, and as long as there is life there is hope. Nor, they argue, should we force a worried and grieving mother to make such a decision as stopping treatment regardless of age and economic circumstance.

Therefore, we have decided upon a compromise. We recommend that we continue treatment for one more week. Those who believe in prayer may pray a little longer. Those who maintain hope can hope a little longer. If Baby Doe?s condition continues to deteriorate or does not improve during this week, our crucial resources should be made available to our next patient, (whose health too is the focus of loved ones? thoughts, hopes and prayers.)

Given the likelihood of the baby being transferred out of the intensive care unit, the Baby Doe family should be advised of other options for treatment and care during this week. Counseling and other comfort services should also be made available to the family.

E.K.
The Winston School

02/26/03

It is obvious that Baby John Doe has been enduring serious malfunctions within his body. This has been extraneously expressed. A baby doesn't deserve to experience something like this. I must ask one important question though; what would you do if that were your baby? Relieving the baby of his/her life support can be compared to murder in that it is the deliberate removal of its life. The doctors aren't 100% sure that the baby will die, and miracles are possible. Also, the parents should have the decision of what to do with their baby. They brought him/her into the world and it should be their choice whether to take him/her out. In conclusion, I feel that it is necessary to let the baby live until his/her last breath has been taken. Taking away its life support would be unethical.

H.B.
LHFC

02/26/03

There is obviously a reason why the family would foolishly keep this practically dead child alive. Whether they haven't been able to deal with the situation, or some religious belief. If you take the child off without their consent, you have violated them and by all means are open to prosecution. When the child dies it dies, it's not in pain, and that won't matter anyway when its brain stops functioning from the swelling. Follow the family's choices.

Drn
Mineral Wells HS

02/24/03

In the case of Baby John Doe, I think it is important to respect the family's wishes. All doctors should respect the families wishes when it comes to those types of grave medical decisions. However, I do not agree with the 14-year-old wanting to keep the baby alive. Although drugs and other medical materials are being administered so the baby doesn't suffer, when those pain-killers finally wear off or are no longer available, the baby will once again be in pain. It is necessary to keep in mind that the suffering the baby is enduring is not fair. If the newborn is in fact only being kept alive by machines, the family should not let him or her suffer. Although it would mean not wasting financial resources, money doesn't matter. The grieving process would also begin and end far quicker this way. If you know beyond a reasonable doubt that the child isn't going to make it, there is no sense in allowing the pain to continue.

J.R.V.
MWHHS

02/24/03

This concept of life is a tricky one. The family, on one hand, wants to keep the baby alive while the doctors, on the other hand, know that there is little, if any, hope that it will survive. The doctors are in no position to tell the family what to do. They are there to follow the family's wishes. They do, however, have the obligation of telling the family of the possible repercussions of futilely attempting

to keep the child alive. The doctors need to tell the family that the baby has little chance of survival and that this may cost them a large financial burden in the long run. The family will probably value the possibility of keeping the child alive over any sum of money. The decision should stay with the parents; their value of the quality of life will determine whether to keep the child alive. If they believe that being alive with major disabilities is better than being dead, then they will decide to keep trying in hopes that a miracle will happen and the child will pull through.

02/24/03

The family of the child are the only ones who have the right to decide if the baby stays on life support or not. The doctors are doing their job by consulting the family in their best way possible. They get paid to tell them what they think they should do. If the family refuses they can't do anything about it. If I walk into the doctor and he says you have the flu stay home and take these antibiotics then I can stay home, follow his advice and get better. In doing so though I will be catching up for the next 2 weeks on what I missed. He gave me advice to what he thought was best. I take his advice and put it to my life best. They can take his advice and let the baby die, but they don't feel that fits their life best. They want the baby to live. It may be hopeless to keep the baby on life support, but prayer can bring miracles. The cost of waiting on a miracle outweighs the profit of not waiting and letting the baby die and not giving it every chance possible. The baby's health has been deteriorating, but don't things get worse before they get better?

For them to stop treatment without the families wishes would be like the police prosecuting a criminal without the victim pressing charges. What if you think your car is stolen and it turns out your son or brother has borrowed it and forgot to tell you, the cops pull him over and arrest him, you tell them you don't want to press charges, and they send him to jail anyways. That is wrong. Just as letting the baby die against their will.

02/24/03

The problem that is posed by this case study is one that cannot be easily solved. There are obviously certain moral and economic issues that conflict with the realities of life. While the family's efforts to preserve the life of their newborn child are quite noble, allowing Baby Doe to continue hanging onto life through the miracle of modern medical techniques is not fair to the child either. No one should be forced to live a hopeless existence filled with suffering and pain. Since the continued efforts of the doctors is futile, it is unfair to force the baby to endure prolonged suffering in the face of insurmountable odds. If the baby is going to die, then there is no reason to continue to waste the money of the family and the time of the medical staff, especially when their efforts could be directed towards more fruitful endeavors. Unfortunately, the decisions regarding this infant are not to be made by an outsider, no matter how qualified or how well informed. This is a decision that ultimately must rest upon the family. It is their baby and no one has the right to deny that child access to life preserving treatments/medications unless they have the consent of the family. The doctors and staff must act in accordance with their wishes and make every effort to make the short time that the child has left as comfortable as possible.

B.D.
Garland High School

02/23/03

I think that for this baby the best thing to do is to stop the treatments. If the treatment is not helping the baby and there is no way for the baby to continue to live anyway there is no need. The family needs to know that the well being of the child is to stop his suffering. The treatments are never going to save the child. The only thing the family can do now is to put this child out of its misery.

M

02/23/03

In this particular case I think that the doctors should continue to let the family know that the situation is fatal. They should continue to do as the family ask and not make any decisions without the families consent. The family may realize that the babies it's last lifeline and is hoping for a miracle. The doctors are looking at the situation from a completely different perspective they see medical cases very day and know what the likely outcome is. In their eyes they don't want the family to have to prolong the babies death any more than it already has been. This time they will have to take the back seat and let the family make the ultimate decision.

J.J.

Lake Highlands Freshman Center

02/23/03

The case dealing with the baby John Doe is very serious and concerning. Although the child means the world to his family, it is also understood that he will pass away no matter what they do. So the family would be the ones to decide whether or not to continue treatment for their sake mainly. I would have to say that they shouldn't continue treatment because his life doesn't have hope for living, so they would just be putting money on things that the doctors have already said won't happen. Also, the child would be put through more pain until he died, rather than having no medicine and no treatment, which would give him more relief. The treatment he is on will possibly make his life longer, but it would be painfully longer, so therefore it would not help him at all. If there is a way that he can still live, any way at all, then I would say try it because if anything has hope for the child, not for the family's sake, it needs to be done for his sake, and not just the parent's hope for his life.

HES
LHFC

02/23/03

Ethically, we must ask ourselves if we would kill a human being. Most sensible people would answer "No". But in the case of Baby Doe we must look at the choices. (1)First, the child will be raised by a 14yr. old, which will take away her, the teenager, chance of having a decent, well-educated life. (2)Second, the baby's life is all ready starting to deteriorate. Since it's Apgar score was so low, it would mean that it's heart would soon stop, it's muscles would be too weak, and it would be too "dumb". In short it would mean that it would not be able to live a healthy, normal life. (3)Third, I sincerely doubt that the family would be able to afford the cost of medication, and hospital care for the baby, unless the family was filthy rich, and even then the baby would not get the love as if would receive in a real family. (5)Fifth, the baby will not last must longer, and even if it did, since it's urinary tract is not functioning properly, it's head will keep swelling, unless it receives dialysis for the rest of it's short life. In short, the hospital should not continue the treatment and care of the baby, because it would continue living in agony, and strife. It would not have a life, and it

would be bed-ridden for the rest of it's life. No living thing should not be put through that misery, nothing should.

BBB
LHFC

02/23/03

In my opinion, it is the family's final right to decide whether the baby should be kept on life-support or whether they should stop treatments. I don't think it matters the mother's age as long she is having other adults help her consider the options, which it says other family members have also decided they wanted to continue treatment on the baby. If I were in this position of deciding the baby's fate, I would leave the decision up to the mother and her family. However, I would strongly urge the family to consider whether the mother would be able to take care of this fragile baby if it did survive. As much I don't think the baby should have to endure more pain for an almost hopeless cause, I feel that the doctors and medical team should not be able to overrule the family of the baby.

EN
LHFC

02/23/03

I think that in this case the baby should be taken off of life support, even though this is against the family's wishes. I believe this because if this treatment is hopeless, the family will have to pay for very, very expensive medical bills and the baby will eventually die. If the baby does not die, a fourteen year old would have a real hard time taking care of a child with so many medical problems. The child's mother who is only fourteen, probably is not taking the child into consideration, only herself and is being very immature. Although medicine saves so many people, someone that is sick who does not have a chance of living needs to be taken off of the machines and medicines and let life take its course. This baby would have a much happier passing if he were taken off of the life support because his pain would not grow in severity. The baby will be taken out of his pain if he is taken off of life support. Although it would upset the family, they are not taking into consideration the baby, and his pain level, which to me is very immature.

02/23/03

A baby's life is very precious, and if there were any chance of John Doe surviving than I would agree with the mother and her family and keep the treatments going. Unfortunately, that is not the case. It looks as if there is no chance so I think the treatments should stop, but the doctors should under no circumstances stop the treatments against the family's wishes. It is not their decision to make. If the family wishes to continue the treatments than it is their choice. But, it sounds as if the baby is in a lot of pain, and if I really cared for and loved this baby then I would say my final goodbyes and let him go to a better place. I can only guess how hard it would be for the mother because I am sure she loves him very much, but it is better to end it now than to let John suffer any longer.

R.H.
Lake Highlands Freshman Center

02/22/03

In Baby Doe's case, I think it would be a waste of time and effort to keep him on intravenous nutrition, antibiotics and narcotics for pain. These and the ventilator are the only things keeping him alive and sooner or later, Baby Doe will either die or probably grow up with problems or disabilities. Since his health has rapidly deteriorated within 43 days, keeping the baby on machines and antibiotics is only prolonging the inevitable. With lung problems, bacterial infections, brain swelling and his digestive system not functioning properly, Baby Doe will almost positively die. I think that the life support should be removed, only because doctors time could be better spent in helping a patient that has a better chance at living. I feel sorry for the family of Baby Doe, but ultimately, the better decision is just to remove the life support, and put the baby and the family out of their misery. 14 is too young any how.

AZ

02/22/03

I believe that the baby in this case should definitely be removed from life support. He is surviving in a completely unnatural and almost sickening fashion; a small, defenseless child being forced to keep breathing by a machine. At 14, the mother is most likely not emotionally equipped or mature enough to make an unselfish decision on behalf of her child, disregarding her emotions. Because of her immaturity, an unbiased party who sees all sides of the issue will have to make the decision for her. As is proven by his Apgar scores, the child is only undergoing so much pain and suffering now to later live an abnormal life full of more pain and suffering without even having a choice.

MES

02/22/03

Baby Doe's case is a very serious case that should be taken seriously because a baby's life is no joke. I was acknowledge that baby Doe was premature and suffered several broken bones,so the medical team think there's no hope. I believe there's hope that baby Doe will survive; they just have to have faith. God has a purpose for baby Doe, and until we find out what that purpose is, God wouldn't let anything happen to him.I believe that miracles do happen, and I now that baby Doe will be a miracle.I just want baby Doe's family to know that everything will be alright. God wouldn't disappoint you all. I also want you all to know that I will keep baby Doe in my prayers.

NK

LHFC

02/22/03

First let me say how truly blessed I am to have never been forced to make this kind of decision. God is the giver of life and I do think that we should do everything within our power to sustain and appreciate life. However after saying that, this is not life. The baby will never get better, the young parent will probably be paying this bill off for the rest of her life and the child is in such pain. The girl is only 14 years old. Who is helping her make this kind of decision? Are there counselors there to assist. Does she have parents helping her? I can imagine the suffering the baby and the family is going through. At a time like this, it is difficult to think clearly. I will not say what I would do in this situation, because clearly, I do not know this for a fact. On the other hand, I would hope that a parent would do what is best for the child and belabor the pain and suffering. Unfortunately, I do think that society and the doctors can not make that decision. I do not believe that anyone other than the parent should be given the choice about their baby. They were old enough to have the

child. I would expect that there would be programs in place to assist young or old parents in choices such as these.

02/10/03

The case study regarding Baby John Doe in my opinion is about quality of life. The Apgar score would have been low with the duress during birth and broken bones. Putting the child in a newborn intensive care unit would be expected. The deterioration of the child from then is the case presented. The doctors are asking a child (14 yr old mother) to make a decision on the life of a child. At 14 the mother is looking at the baby more as a younger child would look at her doll. You dress them up, you hold them, you show them off, and love them... they do not grow up, they don't cry for hours, they do not get sick, they have no real needs. The maturity to make such a critical decision is not there. Every living creature deserves to have some quality of life even in dying. Nature has a way of weeding out the sickest and allowing them to die quickly. Modern medicine is a miracle to many. People are living longer healthier lives but, many who are kept alive through medicine unfortunately have never gotten out of the bed that is their existence. When the medicine is prolonging life and not curing the disease it is counterproductive. Social pressure has created this misconception in medicine that extending life is "The" answer. Life is precious everyone agrees to that, until they are asked to eat dinner across from someone with severe disabilities. If the future of the child is a grim as its beginning then who is the family really thinking of? A child with no future or themselves? Are they mourning the child's loss of life or their own loss? The doctors should call in the hospital counselors and allow them to work with the family. They should be honest and realistic in the outlook for the child. The child needs to come off the ventilator. If he can live, he will live.

MKB
DBU

2/6/03

This is a difficult decision for all parties involved. At first I would say that if it is futile to continue to spend time, resources, and money on the treatment of a baby that has no chance of survival than the "plug" should be pulled. Not only will this keep the tragedy from being an unbearable expense, but also will allow the mourning of the child to start. What it sounds like is the whole family keeps hope and faith that the baby will come across a miracle and survive when the doctors have no medical grounds for this to occur. At second glance, I see it from the family's perspective. If there is any small sliver of hope in this world they do not want to be responsible for the death of their little baby. As for me, being the head of the ethics department of the hospital taking care of this small child, I feel that we should respect the wishes of the family and at the same time make it clear what they are deciding, (the expense and the pain that the baby is going through.) Someone needs to talk straight to the family and they will make the right decision when the time is right for them.

EKS
DBU

2/4/03

A baby's life is precious and careful consideration of such a fragile state of life for its mother's and father's love must be regarded with importance when determining the fate of the baby's life. This 43 day old, premature, complicated baby has already endured so much treatment and "pain" that a state of futility is conceived.

To understand the viewpoint of a true doctor's perspective, the Hippocratic Oath maintains the

ideals of non-bias, neutrally minded physician to uphold the profession. In Lasagna's 1964 modern translation of the Hippocratic Oath, which is recited by most medical schools throughout the U.S., states, "I will apply, for the benefit of the sick, all measures which are required, avoiding those twin traps of overtreatment and therapeutic nihilism." From interpretation, this excerpt defines the span of a doctor's aid to a patient, separated from the extremes of overtreating a patient and "useless healing."

The medical team correctly asked the family's decision about continuing the baby's life support. But because of the age of the mother, fourteen, and the truth of futility in treatment, the family must consider this depressing state of affairs. The baby's life is in the hands of the doctor's, though, and he should decide whether to pull the plug or not to. Strong advice towards the mother and the other family members must realize what the reality of the situation is; the baby is dying and he will probably die sooner or later. The baby should continue to live based on the family's decision. Although this decision is without medical thought, a life is too precious to give up.

J.T.
Poteet High School

2/1/03

In this case study you have the human factor (family emotions) as well as the economic factor (money costing the hospital to keep baby alive). Ethically, I feel you should do what the family asked. However, the family should know of the financial needs of this child over the next few months and perhaps they could alleviate some of the expense by family members contributing blood over the next few months. Are there other facilities the baby could be cared for that would be cheaper? I would engage the social work department on this research.

Often times in the "real world", physicians will not "paint the whole picture". Many times the families are spared the gruesome reality of the patient's condition because they want to spare the family unnecessary emotional stress. The family should be informed, in layman's terms, of the futility of maintaining life support on an infant who has major organ damage. In a life-death situation, minimizing the details trigger false hope.

In this case, the more the family knows the better able they will be able to make an informed decision.

Other financial consideration for this case may be:

1. Financial assistance for select cases that would be part of this hospital's mission?
2. Physician's who will care for the child at minimal expense (take on an indigent case basis).
3. Transferring baby to a more cost-effective facility that would render "comfort care" to the infant. Maybe a children's facility..

BAM
DBU