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Legal and ethical considerations when delivering end of life care to a pediatric client at home

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The home care team caring pediatric clients at home follow a different set of laws and ethical rules than when caring for a competent adult. A competent adult is free to refuse medical care, when it does not endanger others and he has an understanding of the consequences. This set of patients can utilize healthcare directives, such as a Living Will or a Healthcare Proxy. Neither a pediatric patient, nor their parent, is completely able to refuse medical care when their medical doctor is of the opinion that a certain course of treatment will benefit the child. Therefore, conflicts may arise between the healthcare team caring for the child, as well as between the parents, when there is disagreement over the treatment plan. This is especially true, when end of life care is being delivered to a pediatric client at home and the events are accompanied by high level of emotions. These emotions may arise not only from the present end of life situation but from unresolved conflicts between individuals, either in the family or in the healthcare team, caring for the client. This lecture will examine the ethical obligations that a healthcare provider owes to a child, their family and the rest of the healthcare team. It will provide options to understand the state and federal laws that govern pediatric care at the end of life. Lastly, it will provide options on how to recognize ethical dilemmas and how to constructively address them within the healthcare system.

Biography

Edward L King is a Practicing Lawyer for 27 years as well as a Registered Nurse for over 30 years. As an RN he has worked in a variety of fields including pediatrics and has worked with hospice in the home for the last 14 years. He attended Law School at the Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law, Yeshiva University and completed his EdD at Dowling College. His dissertation examined the right to refuse care in New York State from 1914 to 2008. He did his Post-doctoral studies at Yale University's Interdisciplinary Center for Bioethics in 2013. He is presently teaching Nursing as an Associate Professor at Hostos Community College, part of the City University of New York.

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