

Ethical Obligations in Neurology

F. Gerstenbrand

Ethical principles are the main obligations of every physician. In the individual responsibility for his patient the treating physician has to follow the medical guidelines of the Declarations of Helsinki and Paris as well as the Hippocratic principles. The physician's ethical obligation is to follow all the directives allowing him to present himself as well trained and fully educated in modern medicine, providing the ability and his willingness to integrate individual clinical expertise and the best external evidence following "true evidence based medicine". The physician has to be free from economic considerations. The ethical obligations have to direct the physician's acting under his personal moral responsibility with the acceptance of medico-legal instances under domestic law. Every physician has to follow a consequent way in diagnosis and treatment. He has to know that each of his decisions is carried out on his personal responsibility. Best available medical care is a granted right for the patient. As a demand to the treating physician, the patient himself, or in case of a state being unable to consent, the patient's relatives or the solicitor have to be informed in all details. Medical care for patients in severest and hopeless conditions requests special acceptance for somatic or mental suffering.

Patients in severest conditions like apallic patients, patients with dementia after a progressive neurodegenerative disease and after a severe local or diffused brain damage, all of them with loss of consciousness or patients with a severely diminished brain functional level, including patients with the so-called minimally conscious state, need special medical care with a supporting treatment program. Patients in a Locked-in syndrome as well as patients with a progressive disease of the motoric system, including amyotrophic lateral sclerosis, all in a helpless state, but with contact to surroundings, need consequent special care.

The instructions for the treating physicians are given by the Hippocratic principles, with the obligation to heal and not to harm, to treat the patient but not to over-treat him and to free him from pain. The regulation for patients with severest neurological conditions is the continuation of the basic medication and a fully equipped nursing care, following a long-term activating program. Neurological patients with a hopeless prognosis have to be treated in a special nursing care unit. As the third neurological system, the new movement for "Amelioration of Quality of Life" worked out directions for special institutions.

The main point in care of neurological patients with a hopeless diagnosis is the non-negotiable demand for absence of a discussion about end-of-life-decisions as well as plans for diminishing vital support or finishing of necessary medication. Economic considerations are not acceptable. These patients with hopeless prognosis have to be treated with dignity and with the use of all modern possibilities. An "End of life decision" using interruption of nutrition and liquid is ethically unacceptable. An act of withdrawal of nutrition and liquid would be accused in Central European countries as active euthanasia. The renunciation of maximal therapy with all possibilities of modern medicine can be accepted in accordance with the Hippocratic principles.

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Neurologischer Runder Tisch

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ÜNNEPI TUDOMÁNYOS ÜLÉS
Csanda Endre professzor úr 85. születésnapja alkalmából

Szegeden... (1961-1975)

Üléselnök: Vécsei László

1. Franz Gerstenbrand (*Wien*): Ethical Obligations in Neurology. (20 perc) X
2. Szilárd János (*SZTE Klinikai Központ Pszichiátriai Klinika*): Egy elképzelt hatástanulmány (Csanda Endre Szegeden). (10 perc)
3. Somló Zoltán (*Szeged*): Visszaemlékezés... (10 perc)
4. Szűcs Attila (*Kecskemét*): Egy jelenség szociálpszichológiája. (10 perc)
5. Járdánházy Tamás (*SZTE Klinikai Központ Neurológiai Klinika*): Útravaló morzsák első mesteremtől. (10 perc)
6. Saál Mária (*Szent István Kórház, Budapest*): Köszöntés. (10 perc)
7. Komoly Sámuel (*Pécsi Tudományegyetem Neurológiai Klinika*): Csanda professzor és tanítványai. (10 perc)
8. Kövér Ferenc (*Pécsi Tudományegyetem Idegsebészeti Klinika*): A láthatóvá tett agyműködés: a jelen diagnosztikája a mágnes erejével. (10 perc)
9. Mayor Ottó (*OITI Budapest*): A kezdetek után a folytatás....(10 perc)

A résztvevőket szeretettel meghívjuk a tudományos ülést követő fogadásra.