

# Elderly patients with cancer: an ethical dilemma

Nora Kearney\*, Morven Miller

## Abstract

Longevity is the greatest risk factor for developing cancer. However, despite the increasing focus placed on cancer in the elderly, a prominent discrepancy relating to the age of the patient persists, with elderly people often receiving less than optimal treatment and care. There is no doubt that ageism has a profound impact on health care received by elderly people. Incorporating ethical principles into their clinical practice could facilitate health professionals in the provision of optimal treatment and care for elderly patients with cancer. This article explores some basic ethical assumptions regarding the needs of this patient group in relation to the ethical dilemmas of truth telling, consent and relationships, and power.