

Critical Role of Religion: Caring for the Dying Patient from an Orthodox Jewish Perspective

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Abstract

Background and objective: Culturally competent medical care for the dying patient by families and health care professionals is a challenging task especially when religious values, practices, and beliefs influence treatment decisions for patients at the end of life. This article describes end-of-life guidelines for hospital health care professionals caring for Orthodox Jewish patients and their families. Religious perspectives on advance directives, Comfort care and pain control, nutrition and hydration, do not resuscitate/do not intubate (DNR/DNI), and extubation are often unfamiliar to the American medical community.

Design: The guidelines for the care of the dying Orthodox Jewish patient were mutually agreed upon by the authors, recognized authorities in medicine, ethics, and Jewish law, who presented their perspectives during a 1-day symposium and who participated in an active working-group session.

Conclusions: Care of the religious patient close to death is enormously complex especially when balancing religious **Obligations**, the role of the rabbi, medical procedures, and personal preferences. These guidelines address from a Religious perspective profound issues such as the definition of death, organ donation, and caring for the patient at Life's end. The guidelines can be useful for any hospital that serves an Orthodox Jewish population.