

Case Study – Vaccine Hesitancy and Individual Freedom



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Bioethics Case Study

Jennifer is a 44-year-old patient who is critically ill in the ICU. She is COVID positive and is now going through multi-system organ failure as her lungs and kidneys become weaker. Prior to infection, Jennifer refused to be vaccinated.

Some of her caregivers confide to one another that they feel frustrated and angry. “She brought this on herself.” “She signed up for this.” Due to Jennifer’s critical illness, her family feels it is important to be with her, to stay at bedside, and hold her hand. However, the husband and parents are also not vaccinated. They all have co-morbidities, placing them at greater risk of COVID-19 complications. When hospital staff tell them they cannot go into Jennifer’s room without being vaccinated, they respond that their loved one is dying, and are willing to accept the risks.

What should be done?