
Case Study: When is it ethical to override a patient's medical wishes?

Mr. Schumann's Family Benefits from His Survival



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Bioethics case study on advance care planning and end-of-life issues.

Mr. Schumann is a 73-year-old male suffering from acute renal failure and multi-organ failure. He resides at home and has been non-responsive for several months. His family provides all of his care and receives financial compensation for doing so. They also rely on his Social Security, pension, and other benefits for their own financial survival.

Mr. Schumann signed an advance directive seven years ago indicating that he would not want life-sustaining treatment if he were unconscious with no hope of recovery. The family acknowledges the directive but insists that, if he could speak today, he would want everything done - for their sake. They state that he deeply loved them and would want to help them, even if it meant going against his own documented wishes.

The medical team has requested an ethics consultation to evaluate the appropriateness of continuing medical interventions under these circumstances.