**BioEthics at the Very End of Life: Days to Hours**

**Sigma Theta Tau/Epsilon Nu Scholarship Research Day**  
**Linda Carsen Jones Memorial Research Day EIGH**  
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**Objectives**

- Identify at least two selected bioethical issues related to nursing care at the very end of life
- Discuss at least two ways in which end-of-life care clinical practice guidelines are utilized to bring evidenced based care to the bedside
- Examine “existential suffering” and its influence on end-of-life care decision making
- Participate in an analytical discussion of a real case scenario utilizing an ethical framework

**Key Definitions**

- **End of Life Care**  
  Total or holistic care of a person during the last part of their life; last weeks, days or hours

- **Bioethics**  
  The study of generally controversial ethics brought about by advances in biology & medicine. It is also moral discernment as it relates to medical policy, practice, and research. Addresses ethical questions and dynamic relationships between life sciences, biotechnologies, medicine, politics, law, social and health values and philosophies.

**End-of-Life Care Guidelines**

Best Practice Guidelines provides support for evidence-based nursing practice.

- Clinical Practice Guidelines for Quality Palliative Care (National Consensus Project on Palliative Care, 2009)
- End-of-Life Care During the Last Days and Hours Clinical Best Practice Guidelines (Registered Nurses’ Association of Ontario, 2011)

**Bioethical Issues in EOL Care**

- Advanced Directives
- Surrogate Decision Making/Makers
- Withdrawal/Withholding Treatment
- Destination Therapies (LVADs)
- Non-Oral Nutrition & Hydration with Advanced Dementia
- Voluntarily Stopping Eating and Drinking (VSED)
- Palliative/Terminal Sedation
- Existential Suffering
- “Do Not Attempt Resuscitate” / “Allow natural Death”
- Lack of Caregiver

**Palliative Sedation**

*A Grounded Theory Exploration of the Psychosocial Process and Dynamic Reality Encountered by Registered Nurses Who Administer Palliative Sedation to Relieve Suffering at End of Life*  
(Linville, L. - Dissertation Research, LSUHSC School of Nursing, 2013)
**Indicators of Impending Death**

*Identification and Validation of Premortem Surge: A Delphi Study*
(Schreiber, T. – Dissertation Research LSUHSC, 2011)

**Terminal Agitation**

*Level of Spiritual Well-Being and the Incidence of Terminal Agitation* (T. Schreiber – Thesis Southeastern Louisiana University, 2000)

**5 Sources of Ethical Standards**

- Utilitarian Approach
- Rights Approach
- Fairness or Justice Approach
- Common Good Approach
- Virtue Approach

**Framework for Ethical Decision Making**

1. Recognize an Ethical Issue
2. Get the Facts
3. Evaluate Alternative Actions
4. Make a Decision & Test It
5. Act & Reflect on the Outcome

Markkula Center for Applied Ethics at Santa Clara University, 2009

**Last Hours of Life - Case Example(s) for Discussion Using the Framework for Ethical Decision Making**


Registered Nurses’ Association of Ontario (2011). End-of-Life Care During the Last Days and Hours

