

Abstract: Presentation “ Ethical Issues in resuscitation: from Practice to Research”

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Many ethical issues must be considered during the acute phases of resuscitation. At the patient's bedside, the clinician must consider the likelihood of benefit of resuscitation efforts, the uncertainty of the patient's wishes, and whether previously expressed desires, such as “ do not resuscitate”, are meaningful in the context of the acute pathology. The clinical condition of the patient usually causes a loss of capacity, and distraught legally authorized representatives often cannot make reasoned decisions. Resolution of these difficult ethical dilemmas fall sot the clinician, who may have limited information about the patient requiring acute resuscitation.

The ethical concerns get more complicated in resuscitation research. In addition to the clinician's responsibility for the best possible care of the critical patient, now decisions must be made regarding the use of experimental treatments in research subjects who cannot speak on their own behalf. Time dependent intervention often makes it impossible to find surrogates who can consent for research participation of their loved ones, so research can proceed only if informed consent is waived.

This lecture will discuss the decision making process at the bedside for both emergency treatment and research. The Final Rule for emergency research, which allows an exception form informed consent for research participation in high risk patients, will also be discussed.