Ethical Considerations in Advanced Dementia

NURS 6033: Ethical Dimensions in Nursing
Winde Chambers, APRN, FNP
Case study

- Mrs. Inez 84 y/o white female
- Resident of local nursing home
- Diagnosed with Alzheimer’s dementia at age 79
- Admitted to the hospital with dehydration
- GI was consulted on Day 3 of admit for PEG tube placement for malnutrition
Case study

HPI

- Historian– nephew
- Dementia– progressed over past year
- Bedridden
- Decreased dietary intake over the past 2 months
- 30 pound weight loss
- Nursing home– Full assistance with meals
- Consuming less than 25%
- Past week– Sips of Ensure and water with medications
- Nephew– “Wants what is best” for his aunt
Case study

PMH
- Alzheimer’s dementia
- Osteoarthritis
- Colon polyps
- Diverticular disease

PSH
- Appendectomy

SH
- Widow– 1 child (deceased)
- Nephew and his wife– caregivers prior to nursing home
- No living will or durable power of attorney

FH
- Noncontributory
Case study

- Medications
  - Aricept
  - Namenda
  - Megace
  - ASA
  - MVI
  - Metamucil

- Allergies
  - NKDA

- ROS
  - Difficult to obtain

- PE
  - VS Stable, Afebrile
  - 95 pounds
  - Lethargic—Opens eyes
  - Mumbles—oriented to person, recognizes nephew
  - Lungs—Clear
  - Abdomen—scaphoid
  - Bowel sounds—present
  - Stage 2 decubitus ulcer to coccyx
Lab/Diagnostic test
- Admit
  - Na 150; BUN 55; Creat 1.9
  - Hgb 13; HCT 39
- Day 3
  - Na 145; BUN 22; Creat 1.1
  - Hgb 9.8; HCT 29
- Prealbulin – 10 mg/dl
- Video esophagram – delayed swallowing reflex, no aspiration
Case Study

- Assessment
  - Oral phase dysphagia
  - Malnutrition
  - Alzheimer’s dementia

- Plan
  - PEG or not to PEG?
Position statement

- PEG tubes should be considered for patients that:
  - cannot or will not eat
  - have a functional gut
  - for whom a safe method of access is possible

(AGA, 1994)
## Ethical considerations

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“The acceptability and importance of carefully considered decisions regarding resuscitation status, withholding and withdrawing life sustaining therapies, forgoing medically provided nutrition and hydration, aggressive pain and symptom management and advanced directives are increasingly evident.”

(American Nurses Association, 2001)
Legal considerations

- Advance Directives
- Withholding vs. Withdrawing
- Medicare/Medicaid laws for nursing homes
- Reimbursement higher for PEG patients
Legal considerations/cases

Terri Schiavo

Nancy Cruzan
"SECOND OPINION, ANYONE?"
DNP/APRN Role

- Recognize personal values and beliefs
- Advance Directives
- Determine If Patient Is A Candidate For PEG Tube
- Moral Principles
- Code Of Ethics For Nurses
- Assess Cultural And Religious Beliefs
- Obligation Of Veracity
  - Meet with family – Discuss Benefits And Burden Of PEG tube
Case study

- Mrs. Inez’s Nephew—“wants what is best” for his aunt
- No Advanced directives
- Discuss benefits and burdens of PEG tube
- Following Day—Nephew elected to forego PEG placement as he believed she “would not have wanted a feeding tube”
- Continued hand feeding with pureed foods and nutritional supplements
Summary

- Did Mrs. Inez’s nephew make the right decision?
- Quality of Life
  - Improved
  - Maintained
  - Diminished
- SUPPORT
Right to Life?
Right to Death?

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HOSPITAL

FEEDING TUBES REMOVED $50.
References


