

Compassionate Care and Comfort Guidelines

1. Surrogate decision-makers on behalf of incompetent patients or legal guardians of minors have the right to refuse any and all forms of medical intervention, including life-saving and/or life-prolonging treatment.
2. Decisions to forego medical interventions by withholding or withdrawing life-sustaining medical treatment are considered ethically appropriate.
3. In instances in which patients have been removed from life-sustaining medical treatment based upon “best interest” considerations and subsequently die, death will be recorded as natural causes or as a result of the underlying disease entities or injuries. Parents of minor patients in a vegetative state and patients’ physicians are exempt from prosecution for homicide or for any crime.
4. When care and comfort measures have been implemented, it is the physician’s obligation and duty to protect the identity and dignity of the patient and to provide relief of pain and suffering as may be required.
5. The decision-making process is the combined responsibility of both the parent and the physician with the physician’s obligation and duty in caring for infants and children being to fully inform the parents or guardians of the diagnosis, prognosis and treatment options, and the parents’ obligation and duty being to weigh the benefits versus burdens and determine the best interests of their child. The parental decision shall be followed and supported unless there is substantial certainty that the decision is clearly not in the best interests of the child, in which case judicial intervention should occur only when the physician and parent are not in agreement.

(1995)