

# Ethical standpoint of medical workers toward oncology and dying patients

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A human, healthy or sick, is a being; a being that has one's name and surname, his or her origin, family, social status, profession, mental and intellectual life, hopes and disappointments, successes and failures, aspirations. Has a man, his being, his thought, ever been more neglected and forgotten, than in this century of rapid science and technology progress, or has his freedom ever been more endangered than at this time?

A standpoint of the medical workers towards the patient who suffers from malignant tumor presents an extraordinary difficult ethical problem. First of all, a doctor is facing a dilemma, what to tell the patient: the truth, a lie (well-meant) or a semi truth. Opinions are divided. Some consider that patient should be told the truth and that it is the patient's moral right to be truthfully informed of his health. This standpoint is supported by lawyers, who consider that every man has the right to truth, that a patient has the right to know the actual condition of his/her health. When it comes to "common diseases", it is sure that the truth should be told to the patient; when it comes to malignant diseases where medicine still cannot help efficiently, the doctor is facing a great dilemma. Personally, I support the attitude of those doctors who believe that it is firstly necessary to estimate the patient. If we estimate that the one's personality is strong enough to hold on and to resist all the temptations to attempt suicide when he/she learns the unpleasant news, then we will gradually make possible for him/her to anticipate the worst possibility.

Opposite to that, an attitude of *pia fraus* should be cherished – well-meant lies. At the best interest of psychological integrity of the patient, an imposture must be done consciously.

As ancient deontologists used to say, doctors' information should be ambiguous. In this case, we intentionally deny the bad prognosis, encouraging the patient, especially if we notice that he/she is spiritless and prone to quick surrender to the dangerous diseases.

It should be said that the psychiatrists who work there and are often in contact with those patients help the doctors, who are attending them.

The other problem that is often present in oncology, but also in other branches in medicine, is the attitude of health workers towards a dying patient, and, in general, attitude towards death per se. Many health workers are not trained enough when it comes to psychotherapeutic relations to dying patients. In our culture, death is thought of with fear. Fear of death can be stressful to the point of horror. Awareness of complete disappearance, of extinction and vanishing of one's life, is thought of with despair because of the nothingness that should replace life. Our culture appreciates values such as beauty, youth, and refuses to accept death calmly as a natural phenomenon.

Aggressiveness of health workers towards a dying patient usually manifests in avoiding any profound communication with such a person. The dialogue is often short and superficial and it narrows down to habitual phrases and questions. Isolation in a separate room is very common. To put up a patient in a separate room with the motivation that he will find peace and that he will not

disturb other patients, means to displace him from our usual paths throughout the hospital, because, we also want to avoid him.

That attitude is obviously unethical and wrong.

Some experiments have shown that in those "death rooms" patients die faster than in regular rooms. A dying patient is usually well taken care of physically, but poorly taken care of emotionally. This perfection of caring should prevent the patient's asking too many questions. He actually wants to talk to us, but we are afraid of that, because we are not prepared for the dialogue.

Professional task and duty of health workers is to lessen and relieve the horror of dying for every being that is actually dying and all the beings that suffer. A great help to health workers and patients, in that sort of situation, can be provided by the local priest if, there is a chapel or church at the hospital, because, life showed that believers, especially older ones, die more easily.

Therefore, pray to God, help people for we need every human, since we live in a country where every year its population decreases drastically. This fact should concern us all deeply, if we love this country and if we are humans.

Respect your body, because your body is a representative in this universe. Its magnificence is not accidental. Your body is the frame through which your acts must emerge. By which the spirit, and spirit in spirit, speak.

Body and spirit are two phases of your reality in space and time.

If one ignores either one of these, he is lost in chaos.

It is written.

## Conflict of interest

We declare no conflicts of interest.

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