

Correspondence

The decision of do not resuscitate in pediatric practice

To the Editor

The preservation of life is sacrosanct. It is one of the critical elements in Islamic religion. Allah said in Holy Qur'an "Do not kill soul which Allah prevented except in the righteous situation" (Surah Al-Anam 6:151). Also, He said "For that we have ordained to children of Israel; that whoever slains a person, without being soul (life) for soul or corruption on earth, it is as if he slained the whole humanity; and that who saves a life, he is as he saved the whole humanity" (Surah Al-Maida 5:32). On the other hand, Prophet Mohammed (BPUH) asked Muslims to seek all means, except those prohibited by Allah, to preserve and sustain health and life "Allah created disease and treatment, and he made for each disease a treatment. So, seek treatment but do not use harām (forbidden things)" (Sunan Abi Dawud). Professor Jan in his outstanding paper¹ thoughtfully discussed the decision of do not resuscitate (DNR) in pediatric practice from various viewpoints. However, Islamic religion viewpoint on that decision necessitates ample attention in our Muslim communities. At several Islamic Juridical Council meetings held in Mecca, Jeddah, and Amman, Muslim jurists of different schools ruled that once invasive treatment has been intensified to save the life of a patient, life saving equipment cannot be turned off unless the physicians are certain about the inevitability of death. However, pain relief treatment or withholding or withdrawing of life support treatment, in which there is an intention of allowing a person to die when there is no doubt that their disease is causing untreatable suffering, are permissible as long as the structures of consultation between all the parties concerned about the well-being of the patient are in place.² The Islamic religion concepts concerning DNR decision have been clarified by the Presidency of the Administration of Islamic Research and Ifta, Riyadh, KSA, in their Fatwa No. 12086 issued on 30.6.1409 (Hijra) [1988 (AD)]. The fatwa states that: "if 3 knowledgeable and trustworthy physicians agreed that the patient condition is hopeless; the life supporting machines can be withheld or withdrawn. The family members' opinion is not included in decision making as they are unqualified to make such decisions". (Translation by Takrouri and Halwani).³ Practical implementation of that prerequisite faces no obstacles in Muslim communities. However, it is worrisome in countries where Muslims constitute minorities. In these communities, physicians have to follow the living will of the patient or power of attorney's consent for all practical interventions unless one is not available and

there is consensus among physicians regarding the futile care. This issue needs to be clearly understood.

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Reply from the Author

I would like to thank Prof. Mahmood for his interest in my recently published article on the DNR decisions in pediatrics.¹ I agree with most of his comments and appreciate his continuous efforts in trying to share his thoughts and experiences with the authors of our national journal, which continue to create a rich discussion forum for our readers. I highly appreciated his positive comments and would like to point out that I tried my best to avoid hypothetical and philosophical discussions in the paper and concentrated on the scientific evidence. As well, extensive religious discussion was beyond the scope of the paper, and most importantly, beyond the scope of my expertise. I did not discuss withdrawal of life support as this will require such detailed discussions and concentrated on discussing withholding such support (DNR). I also discussed the literature from Islamic countries, which was unfortunately limited.⁴ Finally, although the parents or other family members may not be qualified enough to make a DNR decision, they should be informed and included to maintain the needed harmony between the family and the treating team.

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