

緩和医療の「最後の砦」としての終末期鎮静

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SUMMARIES

Terminal Sedation as ‘a last-ditch’ in Palliative Medicine

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There is a strong controversy about the differences among terminal sedation, euthanasia, and physician assisted suicide in recent medical, bioethical literature. It is said that terminal sedation is passive because the administration of sedation does not directly cause the patient's death and because the withholding of artificial nutrition and fluids is commonly considered passively allowing the patient to die. However, several empirical studies have identified terminal sedation as a possibly significant cause of emotional burden for palliative care clinicians. They consider it very active to sedate to unconsciousness someone and then to withhold life-prolonging interventions, because often the patient dies of dehydration from the withholding of fluids, not of the underlying disease. An important difference between terminal sedation and euthanasia does not exist. In crucial respects, terminal sedation is far from palliative care.