

Ethical Challenges in a Death-Denying Environment

Hamzah E

Hospis Malaysia

Medicine is seen as the panacea for diseases. Yet the goals of medicine are sometimes at odds with the outcomes required by the patient and their loved ones. As medicine becomes ever more complex with the advent of greater technological advances the challenge facing clinicians with regards to aiding the patient in clinical decision making becomes more challenging.

The alleviation of pain and suffering is a major challenge. Issues of access to medication and care, lack of knowledge and skills as well as healthcare financing are obvious issues. Physicians are often unprepared to deal with communications surrounding death and dying. Perhaps medicine itself questions the concept of death? A fear of dealing with end of life issues may lead to further futile treatments. Gradually, increasing nations are accepting euthanasia and physician assisted suicide as an acceptable option in facing suffering leading to complex ethical challenges.