



Joe partied hard. His friends helped him home and into bed. Joe never woke up. He is now in a hospital for three months, on a ventilator, and has a feeding tube. Joe's life is never going to get better than it is now. If you were Joe what medical decisions would you want your parents or significant others to make?

Your grandmother had a major stroke last month and is now in the hospital for three weeks. Prior to this she lived with you. She is famous for the family dinners she cooked every Sunday for as long as you can remember. Now she is unresponsive in spite of everyone's best efforts to get her to wake up. Your family is conflicted about what sorts of medical decisions should be made about a permanent feeding tube and discharging her to a nursing home. How should you make this decision? What factors or details are relevant?





Your uncle has advanced lung cancer and his symptoms are basically well managed. He most likely has 6-9 months left to live. His wife has mild dementia. He tells you that he doesn't want to live like this and just wants to take a pill and be dead. What do you say to him? What if he cannot be comforted or convinced to continue living?

1. Do persons have the right to choose the time and manner of their dying? If you grant this right, are health care professionals and institutions obligated to meet all the requests patients make, so long as they are requests for legal interventions? Does the public (taxpayers) have an obligation to fund the services you desire?
2. Is it reasonable to assume that once we grant the right to die this may evolve into a duty for some to die so that the resources they are consuming may be better allocated? Should government or some other body be granted the authority to determine who lives and who dies?
3. In what concrete ways do individual beliefs, values, and faith commitments influence our response to the above questions?