



415 Michigan Avenue, N.E. – Suite 95  
Washington, DC 20017-4501

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Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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[http://www.ncpd.org/press\\_releases.htm](http://www.ncpd.org/press_releases.htm)

**CONTACT:** Stephen Mikochik, J.D.

(215) 204-8962

[stephen.mikochik@temple.edu](mailto:stephen.mikochik@temple.edu)

**National Catholic Partnership on Disability (NCPD)  
Issues Statement on “Futile Care”**

Washington, DC — The Governance Board of the National Catholic Partnership on Disability issued a statement today explaining its position on futile care. The term refers to the practice of physicians in withholding or withdrawing life-support they consider non-beneficial. The practice received national attention last year when a Catholic hospital in Texas sought to remove a respirator from a dying infant, against his mother's objections, on the grounds that the procedure was causing substantial pain and that the hospital's first duty was to the infant. The incident revealed that many states permit physicians to withhold or withdraw life-sustaining treatment they consider medically inappropriate contrary to their patients' wishes.

Although recognizing that most physicians act with compassion and competence, the Statement acknowledges the reality that physicians are not immune from resting the decision to withhold or withdraw life-support on their patients' quality of life rather than on the quality of the treatment involved. This is especially true today given the emphasis on containing costs. Since such decisions would impact disabled people disproportionately, NCPD, with its mission to implement the Bishops' 1978 Pastoral Statement on the rights of people with disabilities, decided to provide an analysis of futile care in light of Catholic moral teaching.

A central contention of the Statement is that, in judging whether life support is beneficial, physicians should strongly presume in favor of continued treatment, unless death is inevitable and immanent. Echoing the Statement's conclusion, Stephen Mikochik, the chair of NCPD's ethics committee, explained: "It would blink reality to deny that more physicians will rest futile care determinations on quality of life

considerations in the future, and that insurers will become less inclined to pay for treatment for patients with severe disabilities, in effect bureaucratizing euthanasia by omission."

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**Our Mission:**

Rooted in Gospel values that affirm the dignity of every person, the National Catholic Partnership on Disability (NCPD) works collaboratively to ensure meaningful participation of people with disabilities in all aspects of the life of the Church and society.

See attached file,  
or see NCPD's website for a copy of the full statement at  
[www.ncpd.org](http://www.ncpd.org)