

## Cultural Issues

### TERMINAL PHASE - MANAGEMENT

Mankind is preoccupied with managing the final stages of human life. While lifespan has increased, degenerative diseases make the final years particularly difficult, bringing about both physical and psychological suffering in patients and their families.

In Spain, says Tudor, where I have been living for several years, people in terminal conditions may choose to spend their final years of life either at home, with their families, if there are family members willing to care for them, or in sanatoria specialized in treating the respective diseases, or in retirement homes adapted to this purpose, staffed or not with qualified medical personnel, with expenses paid by the family. Spain is a Catholic country rejecting euthanasia in case of untreatable illnesses. However, the reduction of pain by means which may shorten the lifespan is acceptable. The use of sedation in order to alleviate physical and psychological pain is considered moral. In conclusion, managing the terminal phase of an incurable illness is not easy. It is a challenge, ethically speaking. The communication between doctor and patient is essential for the psychological support of the patient, as the relationship provides hope, trust, courage in accepting the situation, and then even calm and serenity.

In Belgium, the final stages of disease unfold in the hospital, says Rayann. If the patient requests society and the family respect it. The patient has full rights over treatment related decisions. Once adequately informed, the patient may or may not accept the solutions recommended by the physician. The medical team have the duty to help, calm and console the patient.

Walid says that things are different in Morocco. Many people with terminal conditions suffer needlessly. Only two public hospitals, one in Casablanca and one in Rabat, provide palliative care. Many patients suffer although they could receive much better care.

#### Topics for forum:

- As future doctors, what do you suggest in order to improve the quality of life in the case of terminal patients?
- What methods would be most effective so that the terminal patient may accept the situation with calm?
- Give examples of relevant cases you have seen in the hospitals where you did practical activities.