

UCLA

Health | **Ethics Center**

Journal Club Discussion

“Do Surrogates Have a Right to Refuse Pain Medications for Incompetent Patients?”



RRUCLA & SMUCLA

Wednesday, April 10, 2024

12 - 1pm

Via Zoom

Facilitated by:
Dylan Manson, PhD

Zoom Link:

<https://uclahs.zoom.us/j/4190430193?pwd=d2Q5UIhDaTJJJeUcxc0Nrd1g3L0ZBZz09&omn=94577910293>

Meeting ID # 419 043 0193 | Password: 121212

—Thank you! —

Article for Discussion: Do surrogates have a right to refuse pain medications for incompetent patients? By Craig D. Blinderman. Journal of Pain and Symptom Management. 2012 Feb;43(2):299-305. doi: 10.1016/j.jpainsymman.2011.09.003.

Abstract: The relief of pain is widely considered to be a basic human right. Physicians are expected to make every attempt to relieve pain and suffering, especially in patients who do not have capacity. This article presents a case in which the family of a woman with severe somatic pain from metastatic breast cancer requests that pain medications be reduced and, at times, held. The ethical issues associated with surrogate decision making and the refusal of medical treatments are reviewed. The obligation to treat pain remains paramount despite family objections.

Facilitator: **Dylan Manson PhD** is the Senior Clinical Ethics Fellow with the UCLA Health Ethics Center. He completed his doctorate in philosophy at the University of Pennsylvania in 2022 with specializations in ethics and political philosophy. His current research interests include the ethics of surrogate selection and related policy, whether surrogates ought to be permitted to discharge patients AMA, and the conditions required to capably designate and/or reject a surrogate.

Discussion questions:

1. Is it ethically permissible to provide pain relief despite surrogate objection?
2. If patients have a right to pain relief, then there is a corresponding duty to provide it. True or false?
3. What strategies may be useful to deploy when a family's determined and vocal bedside presence hinders delivery of indicated palliation?
4. A surrogate may request to limit indicated palliation on cultural, racial, ethnic, and/or religious grounds. Should this effect the provision of indicated pain relief?

This course is offered free of charge. Attendees should contact UCLA Health Ethics Center at (310) 794-6219 if you need special accommodations or have questions or concerns.