

This response was submitted to the consultation held by the Nuffield Council on Bioethics on Critical Care Decisions in Fetal and Neonatal Medicine: Ethical issues during March to June 2005. The views expressed are solely those of the respondent(s) and not those of the Council.

## **Professor A Dhai, Head of Bioethics**

### **Question 1**

CONSULTATION WITH MEDICAL TEAM, PARENTS, FAMILY, AND RELIGIOUS LEADERS WHERE APPLICABLE. IMPORTANT TO FACTOR IN PARENT AND FAMILY VALUES AND BELIEFS IMPORTANT TO RESPECT THE RIGHT TO AUTONOMOUS DECISION MAKING CAPACITY OF THE WOMAN HENCE SHOULD NOT INTERVENE AGAINST HER WISHES. HOWEVER, WHERE FUTILITY OF CARE FOR THE FETUS DURING THE PREGNANCY BECOMES OBVIOUS AND THE WOMAN REQUESTS INTERVENTION FOR CONTINUING MANAGEMENT ON THE FETUS IT IS APPROPRIATE TO WITHDRAW MANAGEMENT OF THE FETUS EVEN IF THIS MEANS OVERRIDING THE WOMAN'S WISHES.

### **Question 2**

- When the baby is extremely premature ✓
- When the baby has congenital abnormalities **DEPENDS ON THE SEVERITY OF THE ABNORMALITIES**
- When the baby has poor prospects for survival because of a genetic or other disorder, or because of growth restriction during the pregnancy ✓
- When the baby has acquired brain damage and is considered to be likely to have severe disabilities later in life ✓

### **Question 3**

In your view, are these the principal ethical questions that the Working Party should consider?

- 1 The moral status of the fetus **EXHAUSTED STALE DEBATE**
- 2 Acting and omitting to act ✓
- 3 Questions about the quality of life ✓
- 4. CRITERIA TO DETERMINE FUTILITY OF CARE**

### **Question 4**

Yes  
YES  
YES

What do we mean by public policy and how does public policy effect decisions?

QUESTION 1

### **Question 5**

**THIS WOULD BE A DECISION BY A MULTIDISCIPLINARY TEAM IN WHICH THE PARENTS, FAMILY AND OTHER APPROPRIATELY SUITED INDIVIDUALS WOULD PLAY AN IMPORTANT ROLE NEEDS TO BE COMBINED DECISION MAKING. FINAL DECISION DEPENDS ON CIRCUMSTANCES AND FACTS OF THE CASE.**

parents together.

**OTHER CLOSE FAMILY MEMBERS, SIBLINGS, GRANDPARENTS**

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**IMPORTANT TO CASE CONFERENCE**

**DON'T THINK THIS SHOULD BE DONE. SOCIETY AND THE MEDICAL FRATERNITY NEEDS TO WORK TOGETHER. THE MEDICAL FRATERNITY SHOULD NOT BE CONSTRAINED BECAUSE OF FEARS OF LEGAL CHALLENGES AND LEAN TOWARDS PRACTICING DEFENSIVE MEDICINE SHOULD ONLY BE CONSIDERED IF LIFE IS PROLONGED WHERE CONTINUING MEDICAL MANAGEMENT WILL BE FUTILE.**

**Question 7**

**NO**

**Question 8**

**YES**

**YES**

**Question 9**

**YES**