**Should We Withhold Life Support? The Mr. Martinez Case**

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End-of-Life Issues With our framework of ethical theories and principles in hand, we begin our look at some of the critical ethical issues in our contemporary world, starting with end-of-life issues. This assessment covers ethical questions related to end-of-life care. Passive euthanasia is the removal or refusal of life-sustaining treatment. Examples of passive euthanasia include removal of a feeding tube or a ventilator, or forgoing a life-prolonging surgery. Passive euthanasia is legal in all 50 states, and the principle of autonomy gives informed patients the right to refuse any and all treatments. Patients who are unable to make such decisions in the moment (because they are unconscious, for example) might have made their intentions clear beforehand with an advance directive or similar document. Things become more complicated, however, when a patient who is unable to make treatment choices has not made his or her wishes clear, either formally in a written document, or informally in conversations with family members or friends. Another problem concerns cases in which there is disagreement about whether the treatment is sustaining the life of a person in the full sense or merely as a body that, because of severe and irreversible brain trauma, is no longer truly a living person. Active euthanasia, or assisted suicide, introduces further difficult moral questions. A patient who has a terminal illness and who has refused treatments that would merely prolong a potentially very painful and debilitating death might want the process of dying to be hastened and made less painful. The patient might want to take his or her own life before the disease reaches its horrible final stages. Should patients be legally allowed to have help in this endeavor? If suicide itself is not morally wrong, at least in cases like these, is it wrong for another person to directly help bring about the patient's death? Is it wrong for doctors, a role we naturally associate with healing and the promotion of life, to use their medical expertise to deliberately end a patient's life if the patient wants this?