

us all

things to different people. What someone may consider 'heroic' may, to me, be routine. I work with life-support machines every day. Exactly where do heroic measures take up and leave off?"

Finally, Skonieczny said there is no legal definition of a living will in the state of Michigan. While other states may have attempted to recognize such concepts on paper, in practice the legislation offers few guidelines.

In the same vein, when does "passive" euthanasia cross over into "active" euthanasia? How would a terminally ill person stipulate that they do not wish to follow or continue a prescribed course of treatment without appearing to be actively pursuing their own death?

Often, the physical state of the patient has deteriorated to a point where their mental competence is questioned, further complicating the issue.

In the case of Elizabeth Bouvier, the Seattle woman suffering from cerebral palsy who sought to force the hospital where she was a patient to discontinue feeding her, the court ruled against her because she stated that "she wanted to die."

Explained Skonieczny, "She could actively not want to be fed, but she could not verbalize 'I want to die.' As soon as she said that, the courts had to rule against her. Society maintains that suicide is legally and morally wrong."

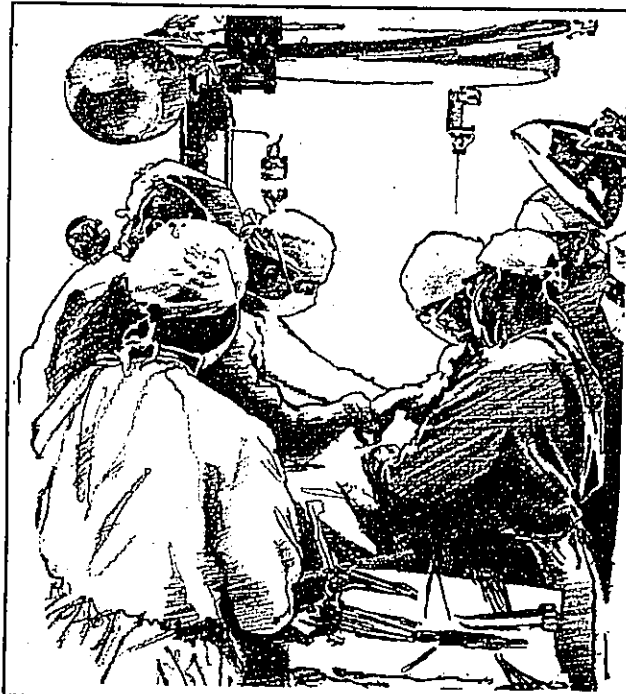
IN THIS MATTER, Skonieczny could speak from personal experience. He found himself in the position of deciding whether or not to resuscitate his dying father. He also counseled his 87-year-old grandmother, who was dying of cancer, with her decision to discontinue chemotherapy and be discharged from the hospital.

"We had to make sure that it came across that she wanted to go home, period, not that she wanted to go home and die. Otherwise, the hospital had the right to keep her there and continue treating her."

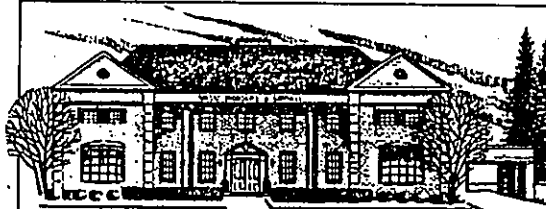
Another sensitive area is the allocation of medical resources for a growing population.

While diseases such as smallpox, polio and tuberculosis have diminished greatly, more people are suffering from long-term, debilitating illnesses that require increasing amounts of medical care. Couple that with a population that is living longer and the increasing high cost of the latest medical technology, and the problem seems overwhelming.

ORGAN TRANSPLANTS cost approximately \$100,000 to \$200,000. Neither that fee nor insurance covers the cost of special rejection-fighting drugs an organ transplant patient must take every day for the rest of their life. These drugs can cost \$20,000 a year.



The "living will" has become a popular concept in recent years. It is a statement whereby an individual specifies that "no extraordinary measures" are to be taken to keep them alive in case of an accident or illness. Unfortunately, they have often proven to be difficult to carry out.



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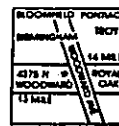
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