

Brain Death in the Pediatric Population: A Case Study

By Clara Hildebrandt

The links below pertain to the case of Jahi McMath, a teenager declared brain dead after a tonsillectomy. The family was very avid in maintaining Jahi's body on life-support against the hospital's advice. This case addresses many ethical questions about end-of-life care and to what extent health care professionals should honor the wishes of family members. The questions below will help you explore these topics and form a better understanding about how you would help a family in the McMath's situation comprehend the diagnosis of brain death.

<http://www.cnn.com/2014/01/08/health/jahi-mcmath-update/index.html?iref=allsearch>

<http://www.cnn.com/2013/12/20/health/california-girl-brain-dead/index.html?iref=allsearch>

Jahi McMath

Discussion Questions:

- 1) How is this family's perception of death different from that of the family in the Munoz case?
- 2) How can we as physicians clarify these situations?
- 3) Do you think it is ethical to provide machine support for Jahi's body if the family wishes it?
- 4) Jahi's family mentions that they are hoping for a miracle. How can you begin to reconcile the difference that exists between faith and medical science that can arise in these kinds of situations?
- 5) What do you think are the ethical issues with the second hospital intubating McMath's body after it was transferred there?