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.


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?