

## **A Challenging Case of Medical Futility**

The Gold Foundation *Ethics for Lunch* Seminar Series: Difficult Cases from the New York-Presbyterian Hospital Ethics Committee

Kenneth Prager, MD

October 21, 2004

1:00 pm - 2:00 pm

Hammer Health Sciences Center, 3rd Floor, Room 301

701 West 168th Street New York, NY 10032

Kenneth Prager, MD, who chairs the New York-Presbyterian Hospital Ethics Committee, explored a challenging case of medical futility. This proved to be another provocative *Ethics for Lunch* seminar, as Dr. Prager discussed how increasingly more people are dying in ICU's from withdrawal of care. The 120 audience members were fascinated and stimulated by discussion surrounding the complex and multi-layered ethical and cultural dilemmas confronting patients, families, and caregivers concerning end-of-life care. In the USA, there is no good mechanism to deal with imminent death futility, as the legal consequences for physicians and institutions are uncertain. In the past, courts have ruled in favor of families wanting to continue treatment despite the advice and judgment of physicians and ethics committee members. Dr. Prager increased audience awareness concerning the lack of policy and law that deal with medical futility and end-of-life care.

We thank the Gold Foundation for generously providing lunch for all attendees.