

About the Book and Author

Many Americans, before they die, will go through a stage where they are unable to make competent decisions about their own life-sustaining medical treatment. More and more, family members and care givers are facing these difficult decisions in their stead, becoming engulfed in questions about personal wishes, medical ethics, state and federal law, and quality of life.

Drawing on provocative case studies, personal interviews, and detailed research, James Hoefler examines the medical, legal, ethical, and clinical aspects of such right-to-die issues. Beginning with the legal struggle of a woman whose son existed in a persistent vegetative state (PVS) for seventeen years, the author moves into a broader look at consensus among professional organizations, from the AMA to the President's Commission to the National Center for State Courts; beliefs of mainstream religious groups; public opinion; issues surrounding end-stage Alzheimer's and other organic brain disorders that can slowly lead to PVS; and the role of artificial nutrition and hydration in these cases.

Hoefler concludes with recommendations on how to improve the quality of right-to-die decision making. An absorbing read with a minimum of technical jargon, this book is a valuable guide to care givers, public policy students, medical ethicists, family members, and anyone facing questions about an individual's right to die.

James M. Hoefler, Ph.D., is associate professor of political science and coordinator of the policy studies program at Dickinson College, Carlisle, Pennsylvania. He is coauthor with Brian Kamoie of *Deathright: Culture, Medicine, Politics, and the Right to Die* (Westview Press, 1994) and is coauthor with A. Lee Fritschler of *Smoking and Politics: Policy Making and the Federal Bureaucracy* (1996).