Lecture 4
Dying and Death

HEAL 101: Health and Lifestyle
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Objectives

- Define death and analyze why people deny death in western culture
- Discuss the stages of the grieving process and how to cope with death
- Describe the ethical concerns that arise from the concepts of the right to die and rational suicide
- Review the decisions that need to be made when someone is dying or has died, including hospice care, funeral arrangements and organ donations

Thinking About Death

- Is death an eventuality we all accept?
- How do most people want to die?
- Where do most people want to die?
- How and where do most people die?

Understanding Death

Defining death
- Dying – decline in body functions resulting in death
- Death – final cessation of the vital functions
- Brain death – irreversible cessation of brain stem function
Denying Death

- High level of discomfort associated with death and dying in U.S.
  - Avoidance of people who are grieving
  - Fail to validate a dying person’s frightening situation
  - Substitute euphemisms (pass away, better place)
  - Giving false reassurances to people who are dying
  - Avoid touching dying people

The Process of Dying

- Coping emotionally with our impending death
- Elizabeth Kübler-Ross – major figure in Thanatology – study of death
- Her book, *On Death and Dying*, outlined the stages of grieving as:
  - Denial – “Not me, there must be a mistake”
  - Anger – “Why me?”
  - Bargaining – “If I’m allowed to live, I promise…”
  - Depression – “It’s really happening to me”
  - Acceptance – “I’m ready”

Kübler-Ross’s Stages of Dying

Coping With Loss

- Bereavement – loss or deprivation experienced by a survivor of a loved one who dies
- Grief – state of mental distress occurring in reaction to significant loss
- Mourning – culturally prescribed and accepted time periods and behavior patterns for the expression of grief
What is Normal Grief?

- Waves of physical distress
- Feeling of emptiness
- Anxiety, insomnia, memory lapse
- Loss of appetite, difficulty concentrating
- Do we only grieve for short periods, or is it life long?
- Is it normal to be sad on birthdays or anniversaries of the deceased?
- Grief also experienced in Quasi-Death Experiences
  - Divorce, loss of limb, retirement

A Child’s Response to Death

- Questions frequently asked
  - “Did I cause the death to happen?”
  - “Is it going to happen to me?”
- Should adults include children in funerals?

Life and Death Decisions

- Serious ethical and moral implications
- The right to die:
  - If condition is terminal and existence depends on artificial life support devices, do you have the right to hasten death by refusing treatment or intervention?
- Artificial life support
  - Electrical or mechanical heart resuscitation, mechanical respiration by machine, nasogastric tube feeding, intravenous nutrition . . .
- Consider a Medical Directive to your physician

Medical Directive

- A conscious and competent person has the right to refuse treatment
- Advanced directives or living wills have sometimes not been honored by medical institutions or physicians
- Choose a physician and hospital that will carry out the directives of the living will
- Make your wishes known to your family
Active euthanasia – ending the life of a person who is suffering and has no chance for recovery such as a lethal injection

Passive euthanasia – intentional withholding of treatment that would prolong life

Hospice Care

- Hospice programs have grown dramatically in recent years
- Allow families to improve the quality of care at the end of life
- Hospice care goals:
  - Relieve dying person’s pain - Palliative Care
  - Offer emotional support (often legal too)
  - Restore a sense of control to dying person, family, friends
  - Allow to die at home or home-like settings

Euthanasia

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Making Funeral Arrangements

- All cultures throughout history have some kind of funeral ritual
- Wake or viewing – body is usually embalmed prior to viewing – memorial service may follow
- Methods of body disposal – burial in ground, entombment above ground in mausoleum, cremation, anatomical donation
- Expenses may include: burial casket, burial vault, container for remains if cremated
Pressures on Survivors

- Do you want to have a large funeral, be buried, or cremated?
- Do you want to have your organs donated or your body used for anatomical study?
- Have you conveyed your wishes to your family?

Organ Donation

- Do you have a will? - Inheritance could be difficult
- Intestate – without a will – if will is non-existing, courts (state laws) will decide the disposition of the estate