

Role Play – Brain Death

Mr. Brown is a 56 year old man who suffered a severe traumatic brain injury in a motor vehicle accident nine days ago. He is otherwise healthy and has no comorbidities. His wife has been in the ICU every day and has been fully informed about her husband's deteriorating condition by both the attending neurosurgeon and neurologist. She is praying for his recovery – a miracle – with members of their church.

Three days ago the neurologist performed the appropriate tests to determine the level of Mr. Brown's brain activity. The results indicated no activity in any portion of the brain and Mrs. Brown was informed that her husband was most likely "brain dead" but that the tests would be repeated by another physician the next day to validate the results. The neurologist has just conferred with the second physician who confirms absence of all neurological activity in the entire brain. Both physicians document these findings, with date and time, and the neurologist enters the pronouncement of death into the record.

The neurologist and a hospital chaplain sensitively inform Mrs. Brown that her husband has died. They tell her that the ventilator and other forms of medical intervention will be stopped after she has an opportunity to be with his body. Mrs. Brown restates her belief in a miraculous cure and insists that "treatment" be continued. When the neurologist says that is not possible, she threatens to "hire a lawyer" to keep the machines going.