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Ethical dilemmas associated with clinicians' decisions about treatment in critically ill infants born in Córdoba, Argentina

Agustín Alfredo Silberberg, Juan Eduardo Gallo

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Abstract

The objective of this article is to examine end of life decisions made by neonatologists of Córdoba, Argentina. An anonymous questionnaire was designed to investigate neonatologists' decisions on when to initiate or withdraw treatment in critical neonates. All neonatologists who take care of critically ill neonates in Córdoba participated in the survey. More than 75% of them would initiate treatment in preterm infants with uncertain prognosis based on the viability of the newborn. Because it is common to find that critically ill neonates lack sufficient diagnostic information at birth, this attitude seems to manifest a certain therapeutic activism. However, more than 80% of physicians withdraw futile treatments that do not produce benefits. Cordoban neonatologists initiate medical treatment based on the current clinical conditions of neonates, applying a certain degree of therapeutic activism. Doctors withdraw neonatal treatment when it is considered futile.

Keywords

End of life, ethics, medical decision-making, withdrawing/withholding of life-sustaining medical treatments

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