

PRESS RELEASE

16/12/2015

NICE guidelines promoting compassion in end-of-life care long overdue

LIFE welcomes the new guidance from the National Institute of Health and Care Excellence (Nice) which prioritises compassion and an individualised approach to end-of-life care, in an attempt to reverse the dangerous culture created by the Liverpool Care Pathway, which saw many terminally ill patients denied access to food and water.

The guidance stated that junior doctors should not be left alone to make 'snap decisions' about patients' care, patients must be treated with respect and as individuals, staff must look for signs that patients may be stabilising or recovering, and doctors and nurses must consider giving fluids via a drip or encourage patients to drink if they are able to do so.

LIFE Director of Education, Anne Scanlan, said "Doctors have a moral obligation to provide food and water to the dying, so long as the patient is still able to process fluids properly. Patients are entitled to this natural means of preserving life. Horror stories of the terminally ill left sucking on sponges, unbeknownst to their families, have no place in our society. We are pleased to see that this issue was specifically raised in the new guidance."

She added, "If a society is measured by how it treats its most vulnerable, then our end-of-life care must uniformly reflect and uphold the dignity of every human person. The new guidelines are an improvement, but more must be done to change the current culture within the NHS.

In October, the UK was ranked the best place in the world to die, according to the end-of-life care index. If we are to deserve this title, a compassionate and individualised approach is long overdue."

END

For further media comment please call the LIFE Media Hotline on 07867 744502

LIFE is a pro-life charity that supports anyone facing a crisis pregnancy, pregnancy loss or after an abortion, and strives to engage, inspire and inform the next generation.