

BIOETHICS CASE ANALYSIS COMPETITION 2010

Presented by

The Bioethics Network of Ohio (BENO)

Judged by the Ethics Committee, St. John West Shore Hospital, Westlake, Ohio

All graduate and undergraduate professional students of any discipline are eligible, including individuals in fellowship or training programs. This case analysis essay competition is sponsored by BENO to stimulate the interest and education of students from multiple disciplines in applying principles of bioethics in healthcare.

Essays must be written in response to the case study below and are **limited to 1000 words**. Participants are encouraged to address various ethical principles and concepts relevant to the case. Entries will be judged on the following criteria:

- Comprehensive discussion
- Discussion of compelling ethical arguments
- Consideration of relevant moral principles
- Persuasive conclusion to the ethical issues raised

Prizes totaling \$1000 will be awarded at the BENO 20th Annual Conference [May 20-21, 2010] banquet, held Thursday May 20 in Dublin (Columbus) Ohio. **First place, \$500; second, \$300; third, \$200.**

Essays must be received via email by **Wednesday April 14, 2010**. Please send to: **a.robichaud@csuohio.edu**

Please include postal, phone and email contact information with your submission, including the mailing address you will use if you relocate at the end of the spring semester.

All entries become the property of BENO. Prizes will be awarded on the basis of the number of entries submitted and the merit of their analysis. Therefore, we reserve the right not to award all prizes. Winning essays may be published in an upcoming issue of *BIO-Quarterly*.

THE CASE

Ms. Suarez, is 34 years old and has had a psychiatric condition for most of her adult life that involves a compulsion to swallow sharp objects. She has been under psychiatric care for many years but continues to engage in self-injury. She has shown up in the emergency department (ED) seeking treatment after having swallowed a pickle fork [smaller than a dinner fork].

It has been necessary for Ms. Suarez to undergo numerous surgical procedures in order to remove many of the objects she has swallowed in the past, in order to keep them from damaging

her further. Over the years, most of these surgeries involved cutting into her small intestine to remove the objects when they became lodged in the wall of the bowel beyond where an endoscope could reach. At this point, her small intestine has many strictures (narrowed areas) as a result of scarring from injuries from the swallowed objects as well as from the surgeries.

The ED attending physician contacted Dr. Dahl, a general surgeon, because Dr. Dahl has treated Ms. Suarez in the past. After reviewing the x-ray studies of Ms. Suarez's abdomen, Dr. Dahl concludes a wait-and-see approach would be most appropriate given there will be further damage and scarring if yet another surgery is performed. She believes it is possible the fork will work its way down and exit the body on its own.

Before setting out for the ED, Ms. Suarez called Dr. White, her psychiatrist, who was able to meet her in the ED. Dr. White spoke with Ms. Suarez in the ED then met with Dr. Dahl briefly to report that he had put a note in Ms. Suarez's medical record stating Ms. Suarez had capacity to make her own medical decisions.

When Dr. Dahl met with Ms. Suarez, she explained why she wanted to try a conservative approach. Upon hearing this, Ms. Suarez grimaced and told Dr. Dahl she did not wish to wait and would rather Dr. Dahl made arrangements immediately to surgically remove the fork.