

## **In Your State, Can You Be Forced to Die against Your Will?**

Few Americans realize that in much of the country, state laws allow doctors and hospitals to deny lifesaving medical treatment, food, and fluids against the express will of a patient or the patient's family. All that need happen is for the health care providers to consider the patient's "quality of life" to be too poor.

To begin with, in all states, an unwilling provider may insist that the patient be transferred in order to receive the care the patient wants. In 10 states, desired treatment, food, or fluids necessary to prevent the patient's death must be given until the transfer can be completed. Those 10 are Alabama, Florida, Kansas, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New York, Ohio, Oklahoma, and Wyoming.

In two other states, treatment must be provided for a specified number of days to permit the family to seek transfer. But in the remaining states, it is either clear that no such treatment pending transfer. Those two states are Texas and Virginia. But in the remaining states transfer is required, or at least questionable under the statutory language.

Contrary to what euthanasia proponents imply, laws which do not provide protection for vulnerable patients are broadly unpopular. In a 2005 survey respondents were told that "a seriously ill patient is unconscious and has never expressed a desire for or against life support." They were then asked, "If the patient's family wants life support for the patient, but the doctor thinks that the patient's quality of life is too low to merit life support," who should prevail?

Almost exactly three-quarters (74%) of those polled in the survey said the family's choice for life should be respected.

What is the law in your state? If it fails to give you and your family members the right to choose life, will you contact your state legislators and demand that it be amended to do so?

Details are available in a report, "Will Your Advance Directive Be Followed?" which can be downloaded from [www.nrlc.org/euthanasia/willtolive/statestatutereport.pdf](http://www.nrlc.org/euthanasia/willtolive/statestatutereport.pdf).

Regardless of what state you may live in, you and your family need to make your treatment wishes known in a legal "advance directive."

For the pro-life living will for your state, or "Will to Live," go to [www.nrlc.org/euthanasia/willtolive/index.html](http://www.nrlc.org/euthanasia/willtolive/index.html).