End-of-life Issues—Preferences and Choices of a Group of Elderly Chinese Subjects Attending a Day Care Centre in Singapore

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Abstract

Introduction: This was an exploratory study that was intended to provide a descriptive analysis of the choices and preferences of a group of elderly Chinese subjects attending a day care centre in Singapore with regard to end-of-life issues. Materials and Methods: A semi-structured one-to-one interview was conducted to collect data from the subjects. Qualitative techniques were used to analyse the data. Results: Forty-three subjects were interviewed. The median age was 71 years. There were more women than men (58.1% vs. 41.9%). The predominant religion was Buddhism/Taoism. 83.7% and 76.7% of the subjects preferred to be told of the diagnosis and prognosis of a terminal illness, respectively. The person most preferred to reveal the diagnosis was the attending doctor (60.5%). About 83.7% of the subjects have never heard of the Advanced Medical Directive Act, while 37.2% agreed that making an advanced directive would be necessary. Twenty-three (53.5%) would choose the doctor, while 15 (34.9%) would choose a family member as a surrogate decision-maker. Twenty-two (51.2%) thought that euthanasia should be allowed, while 15 (34.9%) disagreed. With regard to supportive measures at the end of life, 67.4% wanted cardiopulmonary resuscitation, 62.8% wanted artificial ventilation, 55.8% wanted nasogastric feeding, 65.1% wanted intravenous hydration and 41.9% wanted renal dialysis. Conclusion: There is a need for closer communication between older persons and their carers with regard to end-of-life care. The attending doctor appears to have an important role in this respect.

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