

This response was submitted to the consultation held by the Nuffield Council on Bioethics on Critical Care Decisions in Fetal and Neonatal Medicine: Ethical issues during March to June 2005. The views expressed are solely those of the respondent(s) and not those of the Council.

Anon 8

QUESTIONS ANSWERED:

Question 1

It is not our position to judge if a life may or may not be "worth" living. If medical interventions exist that allow the child to survive, they should be employed. The priority - the woman's wishes or what is ethically acceptable. Whether the pregnant woman's wishes can be adhered to or not is not always clear. If ethically acceptable, her wishes should always come first. If not, she should receive counselling to enable her to accept what is right.

Question 2

prem - should be used congen - should be used poor prospects - who are we to judge - should be used acquired damage - should be used - we are not empowered to judge what future quality of life may be and indeed cannot predict this.

Question 3

Moral status of fetus - The unborn child is still a living human and has as much right to life as any of us. Acting or omitting to act - if there is an unsurvivable abnormality (anencephaly for eg) then allowing nature to take its natural course is acceptable. Quality of life - we cannot tell what the future may hold for anyone and what their quality of life may be. We are not the judges of this and should not be.

Question 4

QOL - their health and happiness - does NOT include ability to live independently. Religion - absolute - we are commanded to no kill. God is the judge of all and it is His Will that should prevail. Media - should not have any influence.

Question 5

God is! Families and doctors have clouded judgement. They should both work together for the benefit of the child. When these things end up in court that represents a failure of trust between the family and doctors in an irreparable breakdown in communication. Parents and doctors views should be taken together for the benefit of the child. If they conflict and independent source should try to help mediate a course between both parties that is ethically and morally acceptable. Mediation not litigation is key

Question 6

None

Question 7

No - adults can speak for themselves. Babies cannot.

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Question 8

Yes Resuscitation should always be attempted subject to the length of time the patient was in cardiac/pulmonary arrest

Question 9

Possibly - but it needs to recognise that life is sacrosanct and that we cannot be faultless in our judgement of situations and quality of life of individuals.