

6<sup>th</sup> July 2009

Standards and Ethics Team  
General Medical Council  
Regent's Place  
350 Euston Road  
London NW1 3JN

Dear Sir or Madam

## Consultation on draft GMC guidance 'End of life treatment and care: Good practice in decision-making'

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the above consultation. The Nuffield Council on Bioethics would like to comment only on the section in the draft guidance on end of life decisions in neonates, children and young people.

The guidance states (paragraph 78):

You must take account of up to date, authoritative, clinical guidance<sup>28</sup> when considering such decisions, and consult a more experienced colleague when uncertainties remain about the range of options for managing the patient's condition or the likely outcomes for the patient.

<sup>28</sup> The Management of Babies born extremely preterm at less than 26 weeks of gestation. A framework for clinical practice at the time of birth. Oct 2008. British Association of Perinatal Medicine [www.bapm.org](http://www.bapm.org). Withholding and withdrawing life-sustaining treatment in children. A framework for practice. 2nd edition 2004. Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health [www.rcpch.ac.uk](http://www.rcpch.ac.uk).

The Council published its report *Critical care decisions in fetal and neonatal medicine: ethical issues* in 2006, which proposed, as the basis for professional discussion, week-by-week guidelines to assist decisions on when to initiate intensive care for extremely premature babies. This led the British Association of Perinatal Medicine (BAPM) to set up a Working Group, which included representatives from a range of professional and patient organisations, to consider the management of babies born extremely prematurely. The Group's general principles and a framework for practice, published in October 2008, were very

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similar to the Council's 2006 recommendations.

Since the management of extremely preterm babies has already been thoroughly considered by experts in the field, we support the GMC's decision to refer readers directly to the BAPM guidance.

I hope that this is a helpful contribution to the inquiry. Please let us know if we can be of further assistance.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Hugh Whittall". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'H' and a long, sweeping tail on the 'l'.

Hugh Whittall  
**Director**