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 The Nuffield Council on Bioethics would like to comment only on the section in the draft guidance on end of life decisions in neonates, children and young people.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\(^{28}\) 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.


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
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

Hugh Whittall
Director