

CASE #11

CONSIDERATION OF THE ETHICAL RESPONSIBILITIES IN THE PROVISION OF SUBSTITUTED RENAL FUNCTION TREATMENT FOR A NON-IMMIGRANT ALIEN WITHOUT HEALTH CARE RESOURCES

CASE PRESENTATION

Complaint

The attending physician requests help to determine the ethical responsibilities for the continued provision of hemodialysis for a 43 year old Fijian man who has no apparent resources to provide for his health care.

Medical History

The patient left his homeland, the Fiji Islands, for the first time three weeks ago and travelled to the United States after successful visa application and sponsorship by his sister. He apparently had told authorities that he was in adequate health during his application process. However, six hours after arriving, the patient was emergently admitted to the hospital for evaluation and treatment of renal failure. Subsequent studies including renal biopsy revealed that the patient has chronic renal failure due to glomerulonephritis. The patient being medically stable, was discharged to receive outpatient hemodialysis three times each week. He does not have other significant medical problems.

Diagnosis

The patient has end-stage renal failure due to chronic glomerulonephritis.

Social History

The patient is a native of the Fiji Islands and has numerous family members who have immigrated to the United States and have settled in Portland. The patient and family would like all medical treatments necessary to sustain the patient's life. In retrospect they admit to distortion of medical facts in order for the patient to obtain evaluation and treatment in the United States. The family is indigent and has no means to fund the patient's health care needs. There is no health care funding from Fiji to provide treatment in the United States or any other country and no availability of dialysis on the Fiji Islands. The \$30,000 annual cost for dialysis is presently absorbed by the treating physician and institution. Renal transplantation centers, including the Oregon Health Sciences University, provide transplants only to patients with adequate funding.

The United States Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) views the visa application and sponsorship to the United States as fraudulent because of the patient's false testimony regarding his health. The granted visa will remain in effect for six months. Successful application for visa extension is not likely and the patient will probably be deported to Fiji.