**Chapter Summary**

Ethical Choices, Third Edition

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Chapter 15: Medical Ethics – Futility

Chapter 15 explores the applied ethics of medically futile treatments: treatments that cannot benefit the patient. It follows the developing story of a dying patient. Initially,the patient is competent. Next, she loses capacity but has a proxy. The implications of both proxies and living wills are considered. Then the possibility arises that some family members want to postpone death via futile treatments. This places the patient’s interests in conflict with the family’s. Another possibility is explored, in which family members refuse to “let go”—maybe as they do not understand the patient’s condition or palliative care. The worst possibility is when a family member still refuses to end futile treatment even after having all relevant information. Are there others whose interests are also at stake? Their interests can sometimes justify ending futile treatment despite the family’s position. The chapter closes with a list of several considerations relevant to futile treatment.