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Unplugged: Reclaiming Our Right To Die In America



Synopsis

It often seems that medical technology is a never-ending string of miracles. But it is also a double-edged sword. More often than not, death today happens because of a decision to stop doing something, or to not do it at all. As the tragic life and death of Terri Schiavo so poignantly illustrated, universal definitions of life, death, nature, and many other concepts are elusive at best. *Unplugged* addresses the fundamental questions of the right-to-die debate, and discusses how the medical advances that bring so much hope and healing have also helped to create today's dilemma. Now in paperback, this compelling book illuminates the complex legal, ethical, medical, and deeply personal issues of a debate that ultimately affects us all. Compassionate and beautifully written, the book helps readers understand the implications of current laws and proposed legislation, various medical options (including hospice), and the typical end-of-life decisions we all must face in order to make informed decisions for ourselves and our loved ones. The hardcover edition was chosen by "The Library Journal" as one of the Best Consumer Health Books of 2006.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Between author William H. Colby's role as the attorney for the family of Nancy Cruzan - who fought for the removal of her feeding tube, when she was in a Persistent Vegetative State 15 years before the Schiavo case dominated national discourse - and "*Unplugged*"'s subtitle, "Reclaiming our Right to Die in America", you might expect unsubtle advocacy. Colby doesn't give it, however; and although he talks about being impartial at excessive length, he does stick to the facts when the 3 individual cases (Karen Ann Quinlan, Nancy Cruzan, and Terri Schiavo) on the right-to-die issue he

discusses are brought up. The most valuable part of the book was the grounding Colby gives in the evolution of Medical Technology and the role this has played in the debate and how it's arisen; it's striking how new these issues are and how much they are dependent on technology. PVS patients weren't sustainable at all in the past - the term wasn't even coined until 1972 - and the difference between the extensive surgery for a feeding tube for Quinlan and Cruzan, and the simple procedure for Schiavo, is vast; it may get even simpler tomorrow. Given that debates have turned on how extreme the measures taken are - and how hopeless a situation is - the moral debates are going to continually change as technology develops, a situation Colby illustrates well. He also shows the potential pitfalls in living wills and the legal mess that still surrounds this issue; his solution is a power of attorney form and discussion with your loved ones. Giving them the power to make decisions and extensive knowledge of what you wanted is a good; a united family with clear knowledge of your desires is unlikely to have trouble carrying them out. Even if the point in the book is repeated ad nauseum.

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