

There are two short stories here. My father in 1970 had a major heart attack, was taken to hospital and thankfully all the family were able to gather to spend some precious time with him as his vital organs failed one by one. I flew back from London to be with him, to rub his hugely swollen legs and feet which were painful and uncomfortable and hold his hands as his life faded. Five days later he died without very much intervention.

Conversely 20 years later in 1991 at Royal North Shore Hospital in Sydney my mother was admitted seven times with heart failure over a one year period. Every time she was resuscitated by the paramedics, and had endless operations and intervention. The catheter put down her throat caused bleeding and over the next week she was bleeding from her eyes, her nose and mouth. My brother and sister and I paid for a "special" nurse to be with her all night in the hospital to wipe her passages from blood. Her carotid artery had burst and other above her eyes. It was terrible to watch her suffer. She pleaded to "be with Roy", my father, but more and more doctors visited her with more drugs and blood bags and saline drip. We finally asked that she be taken off all assistance but the professor said, "We are here to save lives and you have no right to question us".

Please allow families and people who are dying the dignity to say what they want, as inevitable death draws to a close. Prolonging life is tantamount to torture in many cases. Why does the medical profession insist on being the ones to decide. It is not their life. It should be the choice of the dying who have left living wills and instructions to be heard and acknowledged. Their wishes should be adhered to whether in a hospital or hospice and given the choice to die at home without medical intervention beyond pain relief if that is their dying wish.

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