

*From the Spring 2001 Newsletter*  
**A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR**

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This theme issue of **news@vhaethics** is devoted to ethical issues in end-of-life care. Ethical health care practices are an essential part of quality care, especially as patients approach the end of life. In this issue, the Best Practices article by Bob Pearlman offers practical advice on improving care through advance care planning, while the feature by Janice Lynch deals with topics such as palliative sedation, DNR orders, and withdrawing life-sustaining treatment.

End-of-life care is often complicated by confusion surrounding the intersection of patient and family values, legal requirements, and appropriate medical care. The Legal Briefs article by Angela Prudhomme explains the complex relationship between VHA policy and state laws with respect to advance directives. The Ethics Rounds column describes a case involving the use of high dose morphine and sedatives in the setting of ventilator withdrawal

The National Center for Ethics deals with end-of-life issues on a regular basis. For example, we have recently completed two relevant National Ethics Committee reports, and plan to revisit the national policies on advance care planning and DNR orders. To learn more please visit our web site or drop us a line ([vhaethics@med.va.gov](mailto:vhaethics@med.va.gov)). As always, we welcome your input.