**Case Study: Terminating Treatment in patients with VS/UWS**

In the Netherlands physicians are supposed to withdraw life sustaining treatment once recovery is not to be expected. Yet patients in VS/UWS may survive sometimes for decades. The role of the families is thought to be important in medical decision making.

Randall was diagnosed with VS/UWS at age 17, due to brain injury after a car accident. This diagnosis persisted for 20 years. He lives in a long-term care facility and is maintained by ANH (artificial nutrition & hydration) by tube feeding and had a urinary catheter. Randall had several bone fractures due to osteoporosis and epileptic seizures. He had not received any kind of rehabilitation.

The intentions of the Dutch physicians in this case to discontinue ANH were regularly discussed with the family. The parents however, thought there was some kind of consciousness and wanted to prolong his life.

Other medical professionals had mixed views. One physiotherapist stated, “When I move the patient’s hand, I see a strong muscle contraction. I interpret this as a sign of pain perception by the patient.” Some nurses mentioned that they had never seen any sign of pain perception when administering intramuscular injections. Other nurses were less convinced since they declared the patient showed restless behavior when his urinary catheter was replaced.

The family’s view was also mixed. Randall’s parents mentioned their son reacted on the presence of his mother. The father was convinced that his son had some kind of awareness. A sibling’s view was more aligned with the physicians’, that no conscious awareness was present.

Utilizing the Appeal to autonomy and Appeal to consequences, please make a considered judgement as to whether the medical ethics review board should advocate for the care team to continue ANH or terminate ANH. (6 min)