

science

Doctors' actions examined in death of cancer patient

United Press International
WASHINGTON — A 62-year-old machinist who had undergone surgery for colon cancer two years earlier sought help at a hospital emergency room for a variety of painful symptoms diagnosed as recurrent cancer.

The patient, identified as Mr. R. and his family then asked doctors not to administer any treatment other than painkillers and intravenous fluids.

The case was discussed in the medical journal Archives of Internal Medicine by Dr. Bernard Lo, a physician and medical ethics specialist at the Stanford University Medical Center, and Dr. Albert R. Jonsen, a bioethicist at the University of California at San Francisco.

They questioned whether the

attending doctors should have agreed with the patient's wishes to decline treatment and concluded that "sound ethical and legal reasons" justified the patient's decision and the physicians' acceptance of it.

But then four days later, Mr. R. asked doctors to "speed up" his death. Although he was not in pain or discomfort, he said he had reached the limits of his endurance.

This request, said Lo and Jonsen, "created a difficult, controversial decision for the physicians," since this would be considered active euthanasia, an act intended to shorten the patient's life.

Mr. R.'s request was denied. Plans were made to send him to his daughter's home with home nursing care. But before he left the hospital, he began to hallucinate, twitch, jerk and have more pain.

Since it was agreed earlier that no tests be conducted, it was not possible to say what caused the new problems.

Doctors could have done nothing but this would have caused great distress for both Mr. R. and his family.

The use of sedatives and narcotics in this case raised the possibility of adverse side effects and possibly death.

Lo and Jonsen concluded in retrospect the doctors should have administered the least amount of narcotics and sedatives needed to control the symptoms.

But problems developed at 3 a.m. and the two researchers said it was difficult then to consider all the relevant issues. The staff was not prepared to make a difficult decision about unforeseen developments.

In this case, the hospital doctors gave "substantial" doses of a narcotic and a sedative, with the agreement of the patient and family. Mr. R. lapsed into a coma and died that evening.

NASA markets maps from Landsat satellite

United Press International
ST. LOUIS — The space agency is trying to drum up business from private industry for its Landsat series — satellites that monitor Earth's natural resources from 570 miles high.

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration wants to help private industry use the Landsat pictures for everything from urban planning to crop forecasting.

Lester F. Eastwood Jr., associate professor of technology and human affairs at Washington University, heads a team working under a \$100,000 grant to propose commercial uses for the satellite maps. He says NASA is willing to take the initial risk to start the industry growing.

"The government doesn't want to compete with private enterprise,"

Eastwood. "That would be unfair competition. But it does want to stimulate the industry, and it hopes this is the best way."

"NASA wants to demonstrate the capability of the Landsat technology, then step aside and let private business take over."

Eastwood compared the current situation to the transfer of communications satellite technology to private enterprise in the 1960s, a transfer which led to a revolution in the communications industry. Then, he said, the applications were obvious and the companies involved were already giants in the field.

Now, Eastwood said, the technology exists, but the applications and the industries to use them are not so well established.

Eastwood has worked since helping state and local governments find uses for the Landsat pictures. Combining the satellite information with data from other sources can bring many kinds of results, he said.

Forestry companies can use the data for timber estimates, he said, while oil companies can use the data to determine certain land conditions. Eastwood said authorities using Landsat data predicted Soviet wheat harvests months in advance with a 99 percent degree of accuracy.

About 200 companies use the data now, Eastwood said, and the government wants to ensure that the data can be used as widely and as efficiently as possible.

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Human survival, conservation linked

United Press International
WASHINGTON — Humans have become a major force in the destiny of life on Earth, and a major new international conservation project warns that preservation of the world's diverse species may help insure our own survival.

Some scientists believe as many as 90 percent of all species that once existed have been eradicated. Until the last few hundred years, natural forces were largely responsible for the disappearance of plants and animals.

But now, according to the U.N.-sponsored World Conservation Strategy, man is the primary killer of species.

Habitat destruction has been the

primary problem, the Strategy said. "Without its habitat, any given species has nowhere to run and nowhere to hide," the conservation plan said. "Its support system is gone."

"The explosion of the human population and the advancing technology that seeks to serve the needs of ever-increasing numbers of people have simply eliminated many life forms, usually without human awareness or any gains for man."

Not only are humans morally obliged to preserve species, the Strategy said, but "wisdom also dictates that we be prudent — we cannot predict what species may become useful to us."

Many drug ingredients, for example, come from plants and animals

and yet only a small percentage have been evaluated for use as medicines, the Strategy said.

"If we do not preserve the great possible number of the world's existing genetic resources — including some 80,000 plants believed to be edible — we, the human species, may ourselves become threatened and endangered."

The Strategy estimated 25,000 plant species and more than 1,000 species and subspecies of vertebrates are threatened with extinction.

The plan calls for the preservation of as many varieties as possible of crop plants, timber trees, livestock, animals for aquaculture, and other domesticated and wild organisms.

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