



ETHICAL DIMENSIONS

Issue #22

Weighing the Risks

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Mr. J., a 79 year old widower in the early stages of Alzheimer's disease, was admitted to the hospital following a mild heart attack. Mr. J. had been living with his daughter and son-in-law for three months and was becoming increasingly disoriented. During his hospital stay, Mr. J. was anxious and agitated. He repeatedly insisted that he was not sick and that he was going home to be with his wife. The nursing staff, concerned that Mr. J. might try to get out of bed by himself, suggested the use of a vest restraint. Mr. J.'s daughter became angry, saying that instead of tying her father down like an animal, the staff should keep an eye on him to make sure he did not try to get out of bed. She was confident that her father would not try to leave the hospital, and even if he did, he would not be able to because the bedrails were fully raised at all times. On the third night of his hospital stay, at 3:00 a.m., Mr. J. was found stuck between the mattress and the bedrail, his face pressed against the mattress. He had been asphyxiated. Efforts to resuscitate him were unsuccessful.

This case can be considered from the perspectives of individual ethics, institutional ethics, and societal ethics. Respond to the statements below using the following scale:

1 strongly agree 2 agree 3 not sure 4 disagree 5 strongly disagree

<i>Individual Issues</i>	<i>Institutional Issues</i>	<i>Societal Issues</i>
<p>1. Mr. J.'s daughter had the right to refuse to consent to the use of the vest restraint for her father. <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5</p> <p>2. The decision to use a restraint should be based on the healthcare professional's judgment of the situation; consent should not be necessary. <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5</p> <p>3. Mr. J.'s physician should have ordered the use of a chemical restraint to prevent the accident. <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5</p> <p>4. The decision to use the restraint should have been Mr. J.'s, not his daughter's. <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5</p> <p>5. It was Mr. J.'s daughter's responsibility to make sure that her father did not try to get out of bed. <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5</p>	<p>1. Staffing levels should be increased to allow for closer monitoring of patients who are at risk for falling or trying to get out of bed. <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5</p> <p>2. The hospital should be held liable for Mr. J.'s death. <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5</p> <p>3. As a matter of policy, the hospital should attempt to immunize itself and its staff from liability if a patient does not agree to the use of a restraint. <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5</p> <p>4. Healthcare professionals should spend more time addressing the circumstances that lead to the use of restraints. <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5</p> <p>5. More clinical education is needed to educate staff about the hazards of bedrails use. <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5</p>	<p>1. Any institution which receives Medicare funding should be required to have beds proved safe for all patients. <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5</p> <p>2. The FDA should issue standards for beds, rails, and mattresses. <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5</p> <p>3. More healthcare resources should be allocated to researching the risks and benefits of using bedrails as restraints. <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5</p> <p>4. The standard use of bedrails as a restraint should be stopped until data are collected proving that the benefits outweigh the risk. <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5</p> <p>5. The federal government should be involved in establishing regulations on the use of bedrails--similar to the regulations for airbags. <input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5</p>



**OPINIONS AND FEELINGS ARE FREQUENTLY A PERSONAL TRIUMPH OVER GOOD THINKING
YOU DEFINE REALITY BY WHAT YOU KNOW, WHAT YOU BELIEVE, AND WHAT YOU DO ABOUT IT.**