

Who is responsible?

- **Global study looked at 1.6 million patients across 8 countries worldwide**
- **Found a third endure treatments like chemotherapy and feeding tubes**
- **Claims many treatments only prolong suffering and deny dignified death**
- **Experts say doctors and relatives need to 'stop shying away from death'**

A news report by Sophie Borland published in the Daily Mail (*June, 2016) discusses how hundreds of thousands of elderly patients are being forced to endure unnecessary and potentially harmful treatment at the end of their lives.

A global study, which involved 1.6 million patients across eight countries, found that families cause loved ones to suffer at the end of life by begging doctors for unnecessary treatments, including elderly patients, who are being forced to endure unnecessary and potentially harmful treatment at the end of their lives.

Up to one third are given chemotherapy, dialysis, blood transfusions or CPR in their final weeks, which are of no benefit and only serves to prolong suffering. Researchers say family members are unwilling to let loved ones go and pressurize doctors into performing 'heroic interventions', which denied dignified death.

A review by researchers at the University of New South Wales, in Sydney, estimates that up to 38 per cent of patients are put through unnecessary treatment at the end of their life. This includes radiotherapy, scans, resuscitation or feeding tubes which doesn't extend their lives and only prolongs suffering.

Dr Magnolia Cardona-Morrell, whose research is published in the International Journal for Quality in Health Care, said that as a result, many patients were ending their lives in operating theatres or intensive care units rather than at home.

But we ask: Is it fair to blame the families? Or does the problem point to grossly inadequate communication and counselling of the family? Naturally they would be anxious and grieving, would they not? Don't we need to have a more robust health care system that would help the family to come to a state of acceptance?

"Doctors also struggle with the uncertainty of the duration of the dying trajectory and are torn by the ethical dilemma of delivering what they were trained to do, save lives, versus respecting the patient's right to die with dignity." She also highlighted a culture of 'doing everything possible' even though it may not benefit the patient. Her research looked at 38 previous studies.

Simon Chapman, Director of Policy and External Affairs, National Council for Palliative Care said: "We all die one day, and we need to challenge the idea that death is somehow a medical failure."

****Read the full report:***

Families cause loved ones to suffer at the end of life by 'begging doctors for unnecessary treatments'
<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-3662582/Families-cause-loved-ones-suffer-end-life-begging-doctors-unnecessary-treatments.html>