

FROM THE EDITOR

A special issue of *Palliative & Supportive Care*: The lessons of the Terri Schiavo case

This past fall (October 2005), my good friend and colleague Lewis Cohen, M.D., of Baystate Medical Center, helped organize a unique conference (co-sponsored by the Smith College of Social Work) that represented an early attempt by psychosocial palliative care clinicians, ethicists, and legal experts to grapple with the issues raised by the Terri Schiavo case, which had so captured the attention of the nation and raised tremendous disagreement and debate. As editor-in-chief of *Palliative & Supportive Care*, I was, of course, quite thrilled when Dr. Cohen proposed the possibility of our journal publishing the main papers from this unique and timely conference. As the readers of *Palliative & Supportive Care* will recall, this journal has expressed the opinion that the case of Terri Schiavo represented a watershed event in palliative care practice and research (Breitbart, 2005), and we called for more research into the experience of patients who die of dehydration. Of course, the issues raised by the Schiavo case are so much broader and do, in fact, range from palliative care practice and research to

ethics and spiritual issues to legal issues regarding decision making at the end of life.

The two-day conference cosponsored by Baystate Medical Center and the Smith College School of Social Work was entitled “Controversies in End-of-Life Care: Terri Schiavo’s Lessons.” We are fortunate to be able to present eight papers from that conference by leading authorities, from multiple disciplines, who participated in the conference. I leave the task of introducing the “Special Section” of this issue of *Palliative & Supportive Care* dedicated to “Controversies in End-of-Life Care: Terri Schiavo’s Lessons” to Dr. Cohen in his Guest Editorial introducing this unique set of articles.

REFERENCES

- Breitbart, W. (2005). What can we learn from the death of Terri Schiavo? *Palliative & Supportive Care*, 3, 1–3.

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