

# Summary of 'End of Life between Religion and Medicine'

## Introduction

- Dr. Ahmed Higazi, a senior critical care physician and cardiac anesthetist.
- Works at King Faisal Specialist Hospital and has experience in Canada.
- Pursuing a degree in Islamic Studies.
- The talk covers the intersection of medicine and religion in end-of-life care.

## Main Topics Covered

### 1. Islamic Rulings on Seeking Treatment and Cure

- Islamic sources encourage seeking treatment but do not make it obligatory.
- The Hadith of the Prophet (PBUH) states that all diseases have cures except old age.
- Medical treatment is strongly recommended if the disease is curable and life-threatening.

### 2. Stopping Life Support in Islamic Rulings

- The 1987 Jordan conference concluded that if three expert physicians determine resuscitation is futile, life support can be withdrawn.
- Family consent is not required as it is a medical decision.
- Withdrawal of life support is not equivalent to euthanasia.

### 3. Setting Limits on Medical Interventions (DNR Orders)

- 1989 Mecca conference allowed Do Not Attempt Resuscitation (DNAR) orders for patients with terminal illnesses if three expert physicians agree.
- Cases include persistent vegetative states, advanced cancer, and irreversible brain injury.
- DNAR orders should be clearly documented.

### 4. Medical Assistance in Dying (MAiD) and Euthanasia

- Illegal in Islam regardless of patient or family request.
- Islamic rulings prohibit actively ending a life through medical means.

## 5. Preparing for Death: Religious and Medical Perspective

- Patients should have a will (Wasiyah) in accordance with Islamic teachings.
- Encouraging recitation of Shahada in final moments.
- Making the patient comfortable and pain-free through proper palliative care.

## 6. Defining Death in Islam and Medicine

- Religious definition: Death occurs when the soul leaves the body.
- Medical definition: Death is determined by either circulatory death (heart stops) or brain death.
- Brain death criteria: No brainstem reflexes, unresponsive coma, and failed apnea test.
- Islamic conferences have differing views on brain death as true death.

## Practical Considerations for ICU Physicians

- Importance of communicating with families about DNAR decisions.
- Hospitals should have clear policies aligning with Islamic rulings.
- Consensus among doctors helps ease difficult decisions.
- Ethical responsibility to ensure patient dignity in their final moments.