IN THE LITERATURE

Defining Futility?
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Questions for Discussion
Many patients and their families take "futility" to be synonymous with deliberately failing to provide appropriate care. But just because aggressive treatment is discontinued, or is not elevated, does not mean that appropriate treatment, consistent with the standard of care, is not being given to the patient.

1. Is there a definition of the term that can move beyond the confusion and help physicians and patients alike to achieve a mutual understanding of treatments that are in patients' best interests?
2. Or should we simply cease to use "futility"? Explain.

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