# Example scenario

Family of 40-year-old terminally ill patient with cancer refuses all pain medication for fear patient will die. Patient often moans and cries with pain and indicates she wants pain medication. Family has power of attorney and threatens lawsuit if patient is given anything that results in her death. (Pavlish et al., p. 390)

Consider your own experiences when faced with ethical challenges. Were you able to advocate for the patient in the way you thought was best? How do you handle situations when your own clinical judgment may differ from other health providers or from the patient’s family members?

# Ethical Issues With an Aging Population

According to the CDC, “in the United States, the proportion of the population aged >65 years is projected to increase from 12.4% in 2000 to 19.6% in 2030,” (CDC, 2003, para. 2). Caring for this aging population is going to be one of the greatest challenges facing the health care industry. Not only will the number of individuals requiring care rise, but so will the cost. As poignantly stated by Crippen and Barnato, “unless we change the practice of medicine and reduce future costs, and explicitly address the ethical dilemmas we face, there may come a time when our kids simply cannot afford us” (2011, p. 128).

In this Discussion, you will examine the ethical issues that the United States and other nations must address when faced with the health care challenges of an aging population.

**To prepare:**

* Consider the ethical aspects of health care and health policy for an aging population.
* Review the Hayutin, Dietz, and Mitchell report presented in the Learning Resources. The authors pose the question, “What are the economic consequences, now and for future generations of taxpayers if we fail to adapt our policies to the changing reality of an older population?” (p. 21). Consider how you would respond to this question. In addition, reflect on the ethical decisions that arise when dispersing limited funds.
* Contemplate the impact of failing to adjust policy in accordance with the changing reality of an older population.
* Reflect on the ethical dilemmas that arise when determining expenditures on end-of-life health care.

#### Assignment

#### write in apa style a 1 page explanation of the ethical standards you believe should be used in determining how resources should be allocated for an aging population and end-of-life care. Then, provide an analysis of the ethical challenges related to the preparation for the provision of such health care. Use at least 2 of the recommended references to complete this assignment.

Recommended references

Crippen, D., & Barnato, A. E. (2011). The ethical implications of health spending: Death and other expensive conditions*. Journal of Law, Medicine & Ethics, 39*(2), 121–129. doi:10.1111/j.1748-720X.2011.00582.x

Hayutin A.M., Dietz, M., & Mitchell, L., (2010) *New realities of an older America* retrieved from: <http://longevity3.stanford.edu/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/New-Realities-of-an-Older-America.pdf>

Pavlish, C., Brown-Saltzman, K., Hersh, M., Shirk, M., & Rounkle, A. (2011). Nursing priorities, actions, and regrets for ethical situations in clinical practice. *Journal of Nursing Scholarship*, *43*(4), 385–395.

Goethals, S., Gastmans, C., & Dierckx de Casterle, B. (2010). Nurses’ ethical reasoning and behaviour: A literature review. *International Journal of Nursing Studies, 47*(5), 635–650.

Zomorodi, M., & Foley, B. J. (2009). The nature of advocacy vs. paternalism in nursing: Clarifying the ‘thin line.’ *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, *65*(8), 1746–1752.

http://nursingworld.org/MainMenuCategories/EthicsStandards/CodeofEthicsforNurses