

# Ethics After Hours



## **Extremis Documentary**

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### **Summary<sup>1</sup>**

In this documentary, which was nominated in the category Best Documentary Short Subject, we follow doctors and families at the ICU, dealing with end-of-life decisions. The program portrays doctors at the ICU in a public hospital providing care and support to patients and families going through wrenching emotions as they face harrowing choices around end-of-life. This is a purely observational documentary that illustrates the ethical challenges doctors face in assessing what is in the best interest of the patient and providing guidance to family members making decisions on behalf of the patient.

Duration: 24 min.

Produced, 2016

Directed by: Dan Krauss.

This documentary is available on Netflix

### ***Questions for discussion:***

- Discuss the doctors' role in the decision making process by comparing the two main patient cases featured in the documentary.
- In discussing end-of-life decisions with the family, one of the doctors mention that the patient might wake up, but not "in a meaningful way". Discuss the doctor's choice of words in this situation.
- Discuss the daughter's reasoning around keeping her mother on life-support. Do you feel that her decision appropriately reflected relevant values in the situation?
- Discuss the doctor's statement that "Sometimes it can be too much for one person to make a decision"
- To what extent should a young patient's age play a role in the decision to sustain or withdraw life-sustaining treatment?
- Discuss the role of hope in the families' end-of-life decision making

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from program website.