



ועד הרבנים דטאראנטא
VAAD HARABONIM OF TORONTO



בעזהש"ח

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בפ"ד

Judaism views the presence of either respiratory activity, cardiac activity or vital motion as establishing the existence of human life.

These criteria are identical to those presented in Black's Law Dictionary. In application, a patient whose heart is beating, is alive even if he or she is maintained on a ventilator. Consequently, Jewish Law and Tradition regards neurological criteria of death as irrelevant.

The term "brain death" currently invoked is actually a misnomer. Neurological function in the form of hypothalamic activity regulating body temperature as well as other neural functions are present in patients classified as "brain dead". Absence of a heartbeat precedes cessation of "neural function".

Judaism regards every moment of human life as endowed with moral significance and hence to be of infinite value. Not only does Judaism regard active euthanasia to be an act of homicide, it also posits an affirmative obligation to prolong life to the extent that it is possible to do so. Judaism does not accept a distinction between "ordinary" and "extraordinary" measures as those terms are defined in other moral traditions. Situations in which life-prolonging measures need not be employed are few in number and a determination of the justifiability of withholding such measures can be reached only upon consultation with a competent rabbinic decisor.

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