

# Understanding Brain Death Testing: Clinical Protocols and Interdisciplinary Implications for Nursing, Medicine, and Respiratory Care

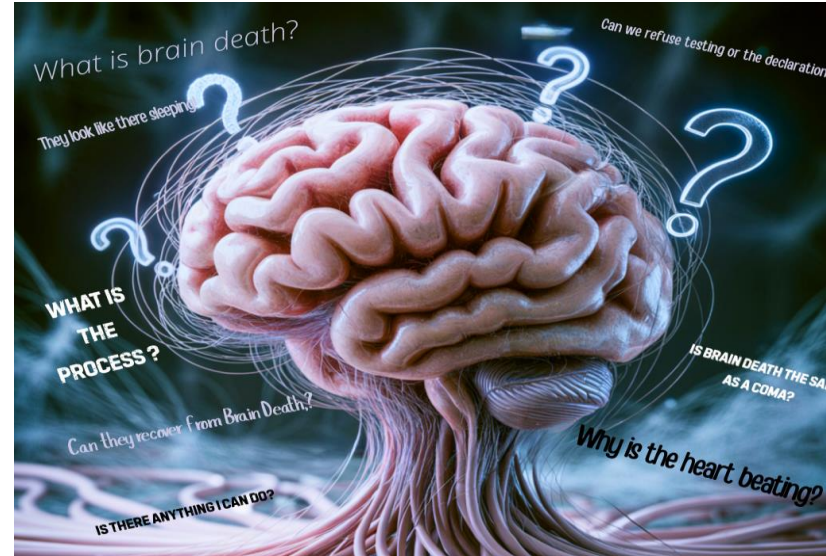
Giovanna Drouaillet BSN,RN, Candida Duenas BSN,RN,CCRN, Mark Dugan, MD, Ciara Geonanga, BSN,RN, Andrew Gutierrez, RRT,NPS, Troy Miller,BSN,RN, Errin Mitchell, MD, D. Michelle Moyle BSN,RN, Jose Napoleon BSN,RN, Nsmire Ntamuhanga RRT, Yuliya Peet MSN-Ed, RN, CCRN, Mercedita Plasterer BSN,RN, Maria Simon BSN,RN

## BACKGROUND

- The Pediatric Intensive Care Unit is a multidisciplinary team, comprised of pediatric intensivists, nurses, respiratory therapists, case managers, and social workers.
- Our team recognized a need for a sensitive, honest support throughout the process of brain-death evaluation.
- When speaking with patients' family and caregivers it is important that all team members are familiar and synchronized with the process of brain death testing.
- Education for the healthcare team will ensure that families experience a confident, coordinated approach that delivers accurate prognostic information.
- Our team formed the Pediatric Brain Death Task Force to support education for staff, develop appropriate communication styles with families, and create handouts to facilitate understanding of the brain death testing process.

## PURPOSE

- The aim of the project is to develop education for families and staff using plain, direct, and empathetic explanations of brain death to promote understanding of procedure and reduce confusion about child's prognosis.
- The goal is to reduce confusion and improve staff support of families going through this difficult process with their child.
- In addition, using standardized language and educational tools, the staff will become more confident providing accurate prognostic information and have a unified approach in helping families comprehend the medical definition of brain death by neurological criteria.



## METHODS

- PICU team formed the Pediatric Brain Death Task Force to support education for staff, develop appropriate communication styles with families, and create handouts to facilitate understanding of the brain death testing process.
- The Task Force reviewed UMC hospital policies, Nevada State Laws, national evidence-based research articles, and interviewed PICU staff to collect the most common questions encountered talking to patients' families about the brain death testing.

## BRAIN DEATH CHECKLIST



## RESULTS

- Development of a Pediatric Brain Death Task Force to provide compassionate guidance and support to families as they navigate complex end-of-life decisions following a catastrophic brain injury.
- The promotion of full transparency with patients and families throughout the testing process.
- Uniform steps improve safety, consistency, and family clarity. Staff needs to know what family has been told.
- The use of standardized language to explain brain death to promote consistency throughout the process and from each discipline.
- Unified approach to helping families comprehend the medical definition of brain death by neurological criteria.
- Training for healthcare teams on verbiage to use with examples of words to use and ones to avoid.

## CONCLUSIONS

- Utilizing up-to-date educational resources and simulation-based training can enhance competency and confidence in brain death protocols.
- Staff in the PICU would contribute to the growing need for collaboration and advocacy in end-of-life care, improving interactions with caregivers as they navigate this complex transition.

## REFERENCES

