

SPECIAL TOPICS



Tuesday, December 12, 2023

Location: HSC, Level 3, LH 6

3:30pm- 5:00pm

Please RSVP [here](#) or to

bioethics@stonybrookmedicine.edu

Food (and Water) for Thought: Language Variations in the Description of Life-Sustaining Nutrition and Hydration

S. Rebecca Stephen, MD/MA Candidate 2025

A POLST (Physician Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatment) form is a medical document that outlines a terminally ill patient's end-of-life treatment preferences. Although the POLST program is national, each state has its own form that may include whether a patient would like interventions such as CPR, dialysis, antibiotics, and feeding tubes.

Objectives:

1. The language describing nutrition and hydration interventions varies across state POLST forms and is often vague, nonspecific, and inconsistent.
2. This language does not sufficiently convey the complexity of feeding tubes and lack of long-term benefit for usage in advanced dementia patients
3. Insufficiently specific language to describe end-of-life nutrition and hydration interventions may impact how dementia patients and their families make medical decisions



S. Rebecca Stephen is a third-year medical student at the Renaissance School of Medicine and master's degree candidate in the department of Medical Humanities, Compassionate Care, and Bioethics at Stony Brook University. She became interested in how language and science intersect while an undergrad at Columbia University, where she focused her research and studies on linguistics and neuroscience. Her primary scholarly work in the master's program concerns how subtleties of language affect perceptions of patient care and medical ethics



Award-winning poet, surgeon, hospital and health plan administrator, Maria A Basile, MD, MBA is clinical assistant professor in the Department of Family, Population and Preventive Medicine and Associate Director of the Center for Medical Humanities, Compassionate Care and Bioethics at the Renaissance School of Medicine (RSOM), Stony Brook University. Dr. Basile is the creator of the Special Topics in Medical Humanities Lecture Series, a student-driven space for presentations based on the research and lifestyle interests of RSOM students and their mentors.