

## The Role of Trust in End-of-Life Decision-Making | Kaveh Ardalan

Based on a combination of literature review and observations at the UVA hospital, the author theorizes about the role of trust in end-of-life decision-making. In chapter 1, the autonomy framework that represents the current paradigm in end-of-life care is critiqued. Criticisms include 1) the autonomy framework's lack of emphasis on asymmetrical power relations in clinical care, 2) its overemphasis on the rationalism of decision-makers, 3) the problematic nature of access to and appreciation of clinical information, 4) the dubiousness of models of choice in end-of-life care, and 5) the autonomy framework's narrow focus on the dyadic physician-patient relationship. In Chapter 2, a case study is presented in which the author demonstrates a shift in thinking in terms of autonomy at the end-of-life to a consideration of the force that trust relations exert on end-of-life decision-making. In chapter 3, the author discusses properties of trust and reviews some prevailing definitions and models of trust. Towards the end of the chapter, the author produces a four part theory of trust that includes 1) assessments of trustworthiness, 2) attitudes of trust and distrust, 3) actions taken on the basis of trusting or distrusting attitudes, and 4) repercussions, costs, benefits of such actions. Chapter 4 finds the author applying the theory of trust to end-of-life decision-making, finding that interpersonal and organizational trust contextualize and frame decision-making. Furthermore, trust is found to be neither inherently good nor bad and can be conceived as a facilitator of action insofar as trust relationships involve some distribution of discretionary powers to trusted individuals. In Chapter 5, the author discusses implications of heightened attention to trust in the end-of-life context. A focus on reliance, vulnerability, power, relationality, and narrative is the product of this chapter's analysis. Finally, Chapter 6 succinctly concludes the thesis and suggests limitations of the work and areas for future study.