

## Model Essay Question

(Suggestion: Consider writing your own answer to this question before looking at the model answer provided on the following page.)

### #6 Joseph

Your fifty-year old ward, Joseph, is in the hospital with end-stage renal disease. The attending physician is recommending placing a DNR in his file and discontinuing dialysis.

1. Discuss *at least* five questions you must have the answers to before you are able to make an informed medical decision. Include the information you must acquire AND explain how you will obtain that information.

**25 total points are possible for part 1.**

2. Apply *at least* three NGA Standards of Practice to how the information you have acquired will shape your decision.

**15 total points are possible for part 2.**

#### Tips:

You will be given 3 hours (180 minutes) to answer 5 of the 7 essay questions given. Allowing 10 minutes to read all the essay questions and select which 5 to answer, you will have 170 minutes to actually write the essays – an average of 34 minutes per essay. You will want to allocate part of those 34 minutes to outlining or organizing your answer and to reviewing the answer.

Also, pay attention to the point values as you allocate your time. In the example above, you will want to spend more time on part 1 than on part 2 because it is worth more points.

## Model answer for essay

#6 Joseph

Exam # 9876

1.
  - a. **What are the reasons for the physician's recommendations?** I would review the medical records and tests and speak with the physician to assure I understood Joseph's condition and to clarify if his condition was medically evaluated as terminal. I would ask the physician the time frame the decision was needed in and why. I would examine the risks and benefits to the recommendation, the risks and benefits to not following the recommendations, and explore getting a second opinion, including a specialty consult.
  - b. **What are Joseph's wishes?** I would revisit Joseph's capacity to make medical decisions, specifically these decisions and obtain an updated psychiatric evaluation if needed. If Joseph was able and has the capacity to understand, I would discuss the medical recommendation with him and ask him what his wishes are. I would fully discuss with Joseph the ramifications of continuing with dialysis and not having a DNR order and having a DNR order and discontinuing dialysis. I would assure Joseph understood what DNR means and what the expected outcome would be to discontinue dialysis, including the physician in that conversation.
  - c. **What are Joseph's core values?** If Joseph was unable to participate in the decision I would speak to any and all available persons, such as family members, friends, neighbors, church family, care providers regarding end of life decisions that could provide insight to what Joseph has expressed in the past. I would also look Joseph's history for any other indicators to what his desires might be such as religious beliefs and past medical decisions.

If an advance directive was not in the medical file I would search for one, looking in places such as past hospital admission records, paperwork in his home (if he was still living in his home), storage units, and bank safety deposit boxes.

- d. **Do I have the authority to make this decision?** I would review state law to determine who has the statutory authority to make end of life decisions and what authority is given to other entities such as physicians and medical surrogacy acts. I would review the court order for guardianship and Letters to assure I had the decision making authority for these decisions. I would also look to a medical ethics board to offer their opinion. I would then submit all information to the court for court approval, with my conclusion and recommendation.
- e. **What are the financial consequences?** I would review Joseph's medical insurance to assure a pay source was in place to address whatever course of treatment was decided on. If a pay source was not in place for the course of action decided on, I would research and apply for needed benefits through available resources Joseph would be eligible, such as Medicare, Medicaid, county assistance programs, VA. It is possible that going against the recommendation of the physicians the insurance and/or other pay source options would not cover the expense of continuing the existing treatment plan. If that occurred I would appeal that decision with the pay source entity.

- f. **What are the after-care options?** If it was decided to consent to the physician's recommendation I would then look at the appropriate placement that would meet Joseph's care level needs while providing the least restrictive placement. I would assure Joseph was comfortable and pain free and explore making a Hospice referral. I would consult with Joseph's medical insurance plan to assure a pay source was in place for any placement including allowing for him to return to his home with in home care or Hospice. If a pay source was lacking I would apply for any needed resource that he would be eligible such as Medicare, Medicaid, medical benefits through any pensions, VA.
- 2.
- a. **Maximize ward's participation in decisions:** If Joseph has capacity to make these decisions, I would support him in doing so. I would assure he had all information needed, discuss that information with him and assist him with any discussions needed with the physician.
- b. **Preference for Substituted Judgment:** If Joseph was not able to fully understand the information, I would gather information to his preferences from him by communicating at his level of understanding. I would give the greatest weight to Joseph's preferences if I was able to ascertain what those preferences were either directly from him or by other information sources. I would look to an advance directive if available and would honor that document. I would gather information on his preferences from any and all sources that know him (such as family members, friends, neighbors, church family, care providers) to assist in determining what decisions Joseph would make if able and combine that with the best option for him that would provide for the highest quality of life.
- c. **Informed consent:** If I could not determine in any way what Joseph would want, I would gather and review all information, including the medical opinions, second opinions, pay source possibilities, risks and benefits to each course of action, the anticipated outcome of each course of action and the interventions needed to keep him pain free and comfortable.
- d. **Recognize limits to authority:** Additionally, to assist in my decision making I would confirm my authority by review of court order, Letters of Guardianship, review with counsel, statutory mandates and present information with recommendation to the court requesting additional decision making authority if needed. I would at all times be sensitive to Joseph's input and requests in the gathering and managing of his information.

Note: This is not the only way to answer this question; it is just one possibility.

### SAMPLE EXAMINATION QUESTIONS

Guardianship interviewing is always directed to the ward and the ward's situation. Which of the following is the most accurate statement with respect to the proper focus of a guardianship interview?

- A. The professional guardian limits the interview to concentrate on objective data.
- B. The professional guardian generally permits the interviewee to talk about facts and feelings with no direction from the guardian.
- C. The professional guardian focuses the interview on emotions rather than facts.
- D. The professional guardian is responsible for helping the interviewee focus on any material, which appears to be related to the ward's situation.

In general terms, which of the following financial products is considered to involve the most risk?

- A. Life insurance.
- B. Annuities.
- C. Deposit accounts in FDIC member banks.
- D. Mutual funds.