

The Last Conversation

Muhammad Ismail Khalid Yousaf MD^{1*}

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Website: <https://ir.library.louisville.edu/jwellness/>

Affiliations: ¹University of Louisville School Of Medicine

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ABSTRACT

The brain-death exam is one of the most sensitive undertakings for a physician, especially a neurologist, because of its social and legal implications. It is the vital examination establishing a clear lack of meaningful vitals, allowing a family to mark the end of a journey and a life finally complete. Physicians who perform and establish this death-decision must ensure they are au courant with the family's sentiments and concerns. It would behoove this obligated physician to bear in mind that it is a human being who will go through this invasive and rough exam. This comatose person is a father/mother, a child to another, a sibling to someone else, a spouse, and likely a life support for many. Those interested souls may be observing this exam; thus the greatest discretion and prudence is necessary. Though this exam is a repetition, the thought process that commences upon entering each room is distinct unto itself — much like the patient's unique life story, inevitably ending with this examination.

Hello and good morning,

I am Dr. Y, your brain doctor
Regretful that you had to go through this unfortunate accident a week back

I am here to examine your vital nerves
I vow to be as gentle as possible while evaluating

I really hope you have been comfortable
Especially in the last two days without the sedating medicine

Your family is overwhelmed and wants me to make sure you are not in pain
I will talk you through the process
And I would appreciate your cooperation

Sir, can you kindly open your eyes?
And look at me
What is your dear name?
Do you know this place?

If not, can you show me two fingers on the right hand?

I do not in any way mean to hurt
I am gently going to rub your chest to arouse you
Please do not hate me for this
I am going to pinch your eyelids to wake you

I am sorry about any ache I caused.
It is okay if you are not able to speak
The tube in the mouth is uncomfortable as well

Your son told me...

Your name is a support system to many
And your kind words have been a source of encouragement for him throughout

Your random jokes are a delight for family and friends
And he wishes you knew how much they all enjoyed your singing

Let me get a torch and a saltwater flush.

I am going to gently shine light in your eyes, apologies if they bother you

Going to take the liberty to put a drop of saltwater in both of your eyes quickly as well
If you shut either eye, I will not drop more

Let me clean the water around your eyelids.

*Correspondence To: Muhammad Ismail Khalid Yousaf
Email: m.yousaf@louisville.edu

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Your daughter told me...

These eyes have captured countless moments of joy and sorrow

They have traveled around the globe and blessed you with priceless memories to cherish

From your first house to your daughter's graduation, they made you a proud witness

I am going to check your ears and eyes at the same time now
Chilly water will go inside your ears

I am sorry this might be hurting, I will hasten, I promise

A towel is placed beneath your head, so you do not get wet

Your eyes might move towards me first

This will not be in your control

Thank you, I appreciate you for bearing this with me.

As your wife told me...

You were a great listener and communicator

Making you an ideal husband and father

She would like to re-live 25 years with you without a second thought

Her family adores you and finds you their own son

Let me change my damp gloves and get the suction tube.

I am going to tenderly slide the suction tube inside your mouth

To make you cough

And assess your gag

Do not worry, I will not injure you

Taking it out, thanks.

I know the breathing tube has been bothersome, especially for a person who used to love food.

Your sister told me...

You would devour a stack of pancakes in one go

And loved cooking for everybody

You were everybody's favorite uncle

As you brought candies regardless of any occasion

I am going to take the sheet off your arms and legs

I intend not to make you feel cold.

Can you kindly move your arms?

How about your legs?

Just a heads up, my gloves might give you a rubbery sensation

Try squeezing my fingers

Thanks for trying.

Though you cannot move your limbs, I do not doubt their dexterity.

As your brother told me...

You were a craftsman by heart

Doing all chores by yourself and rarely calling for help

Cycling regularly to work

And sitting in your garage for hours trying to fix the broken

We believe it

Using my hammer to lightly strike some of your body surfaces

Going to tickle your feet, a little unpleasant it is

I see your right knee bending

And rhythming contractions in your right foot

I know what is going on

Putting the sheets back on you.

I am done.

I am grateful to you for allowing me to do my exam

Forgive me if you felt ill of me during this time

I want to confess

Your way of living to the fullest is inspiring

As you were...

Warrior in life

Role model for your beloved

Teacher to us.

The next team is going to come and do a breathing test in a while.

I will counsel your family, they are waiting

Be at ease,

Thank you, again.