

**Case # 1**

*You are a surgical resident. You meet Ms. K, an 80 year old woman with newly diagnosed **locally advanced pancreatic cancer** after a 3 month history of progressive abdominal pain. She is in the surgical oncology clinic to discuss if the mass is resectable. After reviewing the imaging, your attending staff feels it would be too risky to proceed with surgery. Your staff explains to the patient that the cancer is not curable and a referral will be made to medical and radiation oncology to discuss treatment options to slow down progression and control symptoms. After your attending staff leaves the room, Ms. K says to you:*

*"What's the point if it can't be cured? Why prolong things? I'd rather just die sooner. Can't patients request assisted suicide now?"*

**1. When a patient asks about MAID what is your initial gut reaction?**

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**2. When a patient like Ms. K asks about MAID: How would you initially respond?**

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**3. What are the reasons that people request a hastened death?**

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**4. How would you evaluate the reason why Ms. K is expressing a desire for hastened death? What are some questions you can ask?**

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**Back to the case...**

*After exploring further you find out that Ms. K does not have a family doctor and when she was experiencing abdominal pain she went to multiple walk-in clinics and no one would prescribe her anything stronger than a Tylenol #3.*

*She got the sense that the physicians felt she was drug seeking. Now she is taking 10 tablets of Tylenol #3 a day with only moderate pain relief and is severely constipated. Her last bowel movement was 11 days ago.*

*You also discover that she has no family in town and her close friends have all died. She is on a fixed income, but has been so unwell she has been taking taxis to the hospital which has been financially burdensome. She has an older sister in Winnipeg, but she is quite frail as well and cannot travel to see Ms. K.*

*The things she enjoyed, such as cooking and walking her dog, have become increasingly difficult due to her pain and progressive fatigue.*

## Discussion Questions

5. Now what do you think are the factors leading to Ms. K's request for hastened death?

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6. How would you respond to Ms. K now?

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7. What interventions would you recommend?

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