

# Conference Abstract

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**„INDIVIDUALS, PUBLIC INTERESTS AND PUBLIC GOODS:**  
**WHAT IS THE CONTRIBUTION OF BIOETHICS?”**  
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Title: **“Cadaveric Incubators” – the Problem of Brain-Dead Pregnant Women**

Abstract text: Maternal brain-death during pregnancy is a rare event. Since 1979 only several cases of irreversible maternal brain damage in pregnancy have been reported (about 30). In some of them the pregnancies were prolonged to deliver the viable infant. Current advances in medicine and critical care enable today’s physician to offer prolonged life-support to maximize the chances of survival of the neonate whose mother is technically brain dead.

Such opportunities bring many controversies and pose a variety of challenges in the fields of medicine, ethics and law. At present we face the lack of specific legal regulations or ethical recommendations concerning these very complicated situations which place medical practitioners in a difficult position. There are also important questions to be answered: Does the possibility of using advanced techniques of prolonging life functions mean that we should use them? What kind of ethical principles should be applied for assessing such cases?

In my presentation I will critically analyze the available literature concerning brain-death during pregnancy and discuss selected cases in the attempt to find and characterize the main problematic issues. The emphasis will be placed on ethical aspects of the medical decision-making process. Then I will try to evaluate whether the use of brain-dead woman’s body may be consider as a specific kind of organ donation and whether ethics of transplantations could be used as a base for dealing with these dilemmas.

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