This chapter begins with a discussion of the concept of medical futility. It examines cases dealing with selective non-treatment of the newborn and selective non-treatment in infancy. The chapter argues that while concepts such as ‘futility’ and ‘best interests’ have strong normative appeal, the search for objectivity in their application may itself be a futile exercise. The reality is that decision-makers are involved in a value-laden process, and this is no less true when the decision is taken in a court rather than at the patient’s bedside. The chapter then considers the issue of end of life, examining cases of patients in a permanent vegetative state and those in a minimally conscious state.
16. Medical Futility

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