

Ethics of Sperm Retrieval from a Brain Dead Spouse

The Gold Foundation *Ethics for Lunch* Seminar Series: Difficult Cases from the New York-Presbyterian Hospital Ethics Committee

Kenneth Prager, MD

March 23, 2004

12:30 pm - 2:00 pm

Hammer Health Sciences Center

Columbia University Medical Center

701 West 168th Street New York, NY 10032

Kenneth Prager, MD, offered his second provocative seminar in the *Ethics for Lunch* Series. Dr. Prager, Chair of the New York-Presbyterian Hospital Ethics Committee, presented the issues surrounding the question of whether sperm may be retrieved from a husband mortally injured who has been declared brain dead. His distraught wife wanted his sperm so that she might bear his child. However, because the husband could not provide informed consent, the case presented profound dilemmas. Dr. Prager led a vigorous discussion of the intense ethical dilemmas that can occur at the end of life, which confront the spouse, the families, and the care givers. The presentation, in which the audience participated as if they were the hospital ethics committee, increased audience awareness concerning New York State reproductive laws, the complexities that can sometimes arise, and how compassionate caregivers respond to these profound dilemmas.

We thank the Gold Foundation for generously providing lunch for all attendees.