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## From the Editor's Desk: Euthanasia by Omission

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## From the Editor's Desk



### *Euthanasia by Omission*

It is heartening for us all to see the strong stand that the Bishops of Pennsylvania took in regard to fluids and nutrition in the chronically ill recently (see *The Linacre Quarterly*, Feb. 91). Drs. Eugene Diamond and William May, in their commentaries on the Pennsylvania Bishops' statement, are solid contributors to this long-standing debate and it bears repetition to quote from Gene Diamond's commentary:

This publication by the Pennsylvania Catholic Conference is an extremely timely and authoritative contribution to what has been widely misinterpreted as a by-product of recent developments in life support technology. The use of nasogastric and gastrostomy feedings are old technologies, however, dating back to the turn of the century. The new dimension to the current debate is not technology but cost benefit analysis. The focus of the debate should be kept where it belongs. It is not about the terminally ill patient who is imminently dying and who will die anyway whether or not food or drink are continued by whatever means. The issue relates to the patient who is not dying but rather is being provided food and drink by so-called "artificial" means because of inability to feed himself resulting from persistent vegetative state, coma, dementia, or other non-fatal disability. For such a patient, tube feeding is *useful*, in that it sustains his life and *is not excessively burdensome* because it can be provided at low cost and by unskilled personnel.

In this issue, a voice from the past, John R. Connery, S.J., reiterates the message about euthanasia by omission. Father Connery himself was quite ill when he penned this essay, which has not been heretofore published.

The article was originally submitted to *America* in response to an article by Paris and McCormick in regard to the Jobes, Conroy, and Brophy cases. Father John, who had to be artificially fed, knew of what he spoke when he wrote this article in 1987. He died shortly thereafter. His clear, concise reasoning lays out the case against euthanasia by omission. His reasoning should be of great benefit to all men of good will in these confusing ethical times.

— John P. Mullooly, M.D.  
Editor