Ethical dilemmas around the dying stroke patient
- A qualitative interview study with team members in stroke units in Sweden

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INTRODUCTION
Each year 25 000 individuals suffer from stroke in Sweden, 20% dies within three month. Stroke patients are cared for in special stroke units by multi professional team with focus on the acute phase, the rehabilitation phase and finally the dying stroke patient

AIM
To study ethical dilemmas, different approaches and what consequences among health care professionals working with the dying stroke patients in acute stroke units.

DESIGN
Qualitative method- Content analysis
Forty-one health care professionals working in three different stroke units were interviewed in focus groups or individually

CONCLUSION
Two categories of ethical dilemmas were identified with one main theme. No decision and Problems holding to the decision. These dilemmas emerge Communication barriers among the health care professional.

To make decision of DNR and palliative care is not obvious and simple when it comes to the stroke injured patient. But the absence of decisions generates great frustration among health professionals who care the patient from their own standpoint. Should the patient be mobilized, have physiotherapy, should pain be relived or are the focus still on signs of consciousness, should the patient have nutrition maybe by a tube?

Specialized stroke physicians need to learn palliative medicine in order to get the skills required to identify a dying stroke patient and to make an end of life decision. A standardized tool and common strategies in the team facilitates communication and are necessary to create secure, trustful, and meaningful care.