



Cancer Education Project

The Right to Choose: A Cancer Case Study

Overview:

This activity develops students' understanding that individuals with cancer must weigh the risks, benefits, and tradeoffs associated with various cancer treatments. It is hoped that they recognize there is little reliable evidence to support many of the alternative "cancer cures" advertised on web sites.

Teacher Instructions

Class 1: (20 minutes)

Students read *Part 1: Abraham's Story*, an article about a real court case involving a teenager ordered to undergo conventional cancer treatment. They work individually and then as a team to complete a chart summarizing the facts, the issues, and the questions they have about the case. The class creates a "topical barometer" to reflect the class members' opinions on the issue. Then the teacher assigns students to work in teams of 3 students. The teacher should encourage teams to explore both the scientific facts and the ethical issues in this case. Teams do research on Hodgkin's lymphoma to answer the questions raised in their discussions.

Class 2: (40 minutes)

Each team reports out on ONE question/answer that they feel is most important to understanding this case. The class then reads the article in *Part 2: Witnesses in the Case*. Divide class into 5 new teams. Each team is assigned the role of an expert witness for the pending trial. Team members do research to find factual information that they will use in their testimony. Additional homework or class time for research may be needed.

Class 3: (40 minutes)

Teams complete *Part 2: Witnesses for the Case*. In this activity students assume the role of witnesses in the legal case. They work together briefly to select and summarize the testimony that they feel is factual and relevant to the case. Then, teams present their factual evidence to the class. Students are encouraged to ask questions of the witnesses. Half of the class acts as the legal team for Abraham and his parents. The other half of the class acts as the legal team for the Social Services Department. The teacher may act as the judge to ask for clarification of

factual scientific information. The teacher should encourage students to explore both the scientific facts and the ethical issues in this case.

Class 4: (40 minutes)

Students complete *Part 3: If You Were the Judge* by using an ethical decision-making model to explore the ethical issues in this case. In this activity, students assume the role of a judge who must make a ruling in this case. Individual students complete a position statement. In *Part 4: The Verdict*, the class creates a new “topical barometer” and students reflect on possible changes in the Topical Barometer Data. They may explore internet postings on how others feel about this issue.

Part 1: Abraham's Story

Teen Fights for Right to Pick Hodgkin's Treatment

February 2006

Seventeen year-old Abraham Cherrix discovered a lump on his neck that turned out to be Hodgkin's lymphoma, a type of cancer that starts in the lymphatic system. With treatment, Hodgkin's disease has a high survival rate.

For three months, Abraham was treated using the conventional methods of chemotherapy and radiation. The side effects of these treatments made him horribly sick and weak. For a while after treatment, his cancer was in remission. Then Abraham's doctors told him that his cancer had reappeared and he needed a second round of chemotherapy. Abraham said "No!" and his parents supported his decision. He chose to be treated with an alternative cancer treatment called the Hoxsey method. Under the guidance of a clinic in Mexico, Abraham takes an herbal remedy four times a day and follows an organic diet.

Abraham was shocked to discover that the County Social Services Department had charged his parents with medical neglect and asked the court to order Abraham to undergo chemotherapy. The Social Services Department's action was based on its obligation to protect the well-being of a minor.

Abraham and his parents argue that he is old enough to make decisions about treatment to save his life. They insist that he should have the right to refuse the chemotherapy treatment that he believes would kill him. He is getting medical care, just not the care that his doctors recommend.

1. Work individually. List the facts and issues in the case. Then list the questions that you have about the case. Record your work in the 3-column chart on the next page.
2. Do you think that Adam should be required to undergo additional cancer treatment? Write either "YES" or "NO" on the Post-it ^(TM) note provided by your teacher. Place your Post-it ^(TM) note on the Topical Barometer Bar Graph.
3. Work with your team. Appoint a team poster-maker, a team spokesperson, and a team recorder.
4. Work with your team to create a large poster listing the facts, issues, and questions that are relevant to this case. The team poster should look like the one on the next page.

3-Column Chart: The Right to Choose?

What are the facts of this case?	What are the issues in this case?	What questions do you have about this case?

5. Number the questions on your team's poster. Divide the questions to assign each member of the team certain questions. Assign each member of your team a different resource selected from the list below. Team members should read their assigned resource to find the answers to their assigned questions.

- MedlinePlus: Hodgkin's Disease
<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/hodgkinsdisease.html>
- American Cancer Society: What is Hodgkin's Disease
http://www.cancer.org/docroot/CRI/content/CRI_2_4_1X_What_is_Hodgkins_disease_20.asp
- What You Need to Know About Hodgkin's Disease
http://www.cancer.gov/pdf/WYNTK/WYNTK_hodgkin.pdf

6. Use the space below to take notes on the information you find from your research.

7. Work as a team to answer the questions on your team's poster. The team recorder should write the team's answers on notebook paper. The team spokesperson should be prepared to explain the answers to the team's questions to the class.

Part 2: Witnesses for the Case

Teen Ordered to Undergo Chemotherapy

July 2006

A juvenile court judge has ruled that Abraham Cherrix's parents were medically neglectful. He ordered Abraham to report to the hospital to begin his second round of chemotherapy. He also ruled that Abraham's parents must share his custody with the County Social Services Department.

The lawyer for the family appealed the judge's order and asked that Abraham not be forced to undergo chemotherapy until the issue was decided by a higher court. He contended that although Abraham was a minor, his decision to refuse chemotherapy was an informed one because it involved studying and researching available treatments for his condition.

Teen Won't Have to Undergo Chemo Treatment for Now

July 2006

On the morning that Abraham was supposed to report to the hospital, a Circuit Judge suspended the lower court's ruling and ordered a new trial. The attorney for the County Social Services Department indicated that the department would not object to suspending the earlier ruling by a juvenile court judge provided that a new trial takes place quickly.

Your team has been asked to testify at Abraham Cherrix's trial. Your teacher will assign a different role to each team. Teams will do research to prepare for their roles as **Expert Witnesses**. Review the role that your team will play in the trial.

Work with your team to research and prepare for your team's testimony in this case. All members of your team should be prepared to provide relevant testimony that includes factual evidence related to the medical and legal issues in this case.

Role Cards: Distribute one role card to each student team

Dr. Richard Demi

An oncologist for the University Cancer Center

Abraham's legal team has asked you to testify on the risks and side effects of the conventional Hodgkin's lymphoma treatments (chemotherapy, radiation therapy, and immunotherapy).

Dr. Delores Nelson

A representative from the Hoxsey clinic

Abraham's legal team has asked you to testify on the effectiveness and safety of the Hoxsey method for treating Hodgkin's lymphoma.

Dr. Raj Patel

A scientist from a cancer research center

The Social Service Department's legal team has asked you to testify on how cancer cells are destroyed by conventional Hodgkin's lymphoma treatments (chemotherapy, radiation therapy, and immunotherapy).

Dr. Jennifer Chun

A clinical oncologist for the University Cancer Center

The Social Service Department's legal team has asked you to testify on the safety and effectiveness of conventional Hodgkin's lymphoma treatments (chemotherapy, radiation therapy and immunotherapy).

Dr. Claude Cleever

A scientist representing the Skeptics Society of America

The Social Service Department's legal team has asked you to testify on the effectiveness and safety of the Hoxsey method for treating Hodgkin's lymphoma.

List of Resources for Preparing for Expert Scientific Testimony

Conventional Treatments for Hodgkin's Disease:

- Chemotherapy
http://www.cancer.org/docroot/CRI/content/CRI_2_4_4X_Chemotherapy_20.asp?rnav=cri
- Radiation therapy
http://www.cancer.org/docroot/CRI/content/CRI_2_4_4X_Radiation_Therapy_20.asp?rnav=cri
- Stem cell transplantation
http://www.cancer.org/docroot/CRI/content/CRI_2_4_4X_Autologous_Bone_Marrow_Stem_Cell_Transplantation_and_Peripheral_Blood_Stem_Cell_Transplantation_20.asp?rnav=cri
- Treatment options by stages
http://www.cancer.org/docroot/CRI/content/CRI_2_4_4X_Treatment_Options_by_Stage_20.asp?rnav=cri
- Immunotherapy <http://www.lymphomainfo.net/therapy/immunotherapy/index.html>

Alternative Cancer Therapy:

- QuackWatch: A Special Message to Cancer Patients Seeking Alternative Therapy
<http://www.quackwatch.org/00AboutQuackwatch/altseek.html>
- National Center For Complementary and Alternative Medicine, Get The Facts: Cancer and Complementary and Alternative Medicines
<http://nccam.nih.gov/health/camcancer/camcancer.pdf>
- Oncolink: Cancer Treatment Information <http://www.oncolink.com/treatment/>

Hoxsey Treatment:

- Website for the Bio-Medical Center (Hoxsey Clinic)
http://www.cancure.org/hoxsey_clinic.htm
- BC Cancer Agency Hoxsey's Herbal Tonic/Hoxsey Herbal Treatment
<http://www.bccancer.bc.ca/PPI/UnconventionalTherapies/HoxseysHerbalTonicHoxseyHerbalTreatment.htm>
- The Abraham Cherrix cancer story the media won't print
<http://www.newstarget.com/z019852.html>
- Questionable Cancer Therapies
<http://www.quackwatch.org/01QuackeryRelatedTopics/cancer.html>

Rights of Mature Minors to Make Medical Decisions:

- Not So Gray Anymore: A Mature Minor's Capacity to Consent to Medical Treatment.
Dalizza Marques-Lopez, J.D., LL.M. candidate
[http://www.law.uh.edu/healthlaw/perspectives/2006/\(DM\)MatureMinor.pdf](http://www.law.uh.edu/healthlaw/perspectives/2006/(DM)MatureMinor.pdf)
- PEDIATRICS, Volume 95 Number 2, Pages 314-317, February 1995. Informed Consent, Parental Permission, and Assent in Pediatric Practice Committee on Bioethics
<http://www.cirp.org/library/ethics/AAP/>

Part 3: If You Were the Judge

If you were the judge at this trial, what ruling would you make?

Work as a whole class to discuss and complete Steps 1-3

1. What is the ethical problem or dilemma?

2. Identify the stakeholders who may be affected by the decision.

3. List others who could assist or influence the stakeholders in making the decision?

Work as a Team to discuss Steps 4-6 and complete the Ethical Decision-Making Chart on the next page.

4. Describe at least three possible courses of action and record these on the Ethical Decision-Making Chart.
5. Describe the benefits (pros) and risks (cons) of each course of action on the Ethical Decision-Making Chart.
6. Identify the ethical principles and values which support each course of action on the Ethical Decision-Making Chart. Refer to the Ethical Principles and Values Charts below.

Ethical Principle	Definition
Autonomy	Freedom to make one's own decisions
Beneficence	Doing what is best
Justice	Being fair
Nonmaleficence	Avoiding harm

Value *	Meaning or Definition
Compassion	Empathy for and actions to relieve other's suffering
Confidentiality	Keeping a secret
Fidelity	Keeping a promise; fulfilling obligations and duties
Golden Rule	Treating others only as you consent to being treated
Honesty	Telling the truth
Integrity	Conforming to one's ethical principles and moral values
Privacy	Kept from public view
Respect	Regard for the dignity of self and others

* Other values may be important also.

Ethical Decision-Making Chart

Ethical dilemma being discussed: _____

Courses of Action	Pros (benefits)	Cons (risks)	Ethical Principles Involved	Values Involved

Work individually to complete Steps 7 and 8

7. Use the information in the Ethical Decision-Making Chart to identify your choice for the best course of action.

8. Use the following questions to develop a position statement to support your choice for the best course of action.

- What ethical principles and values support your choice?
- What are the benefits of this course of action?
- Do the benefits outweigh the risks? Explain.

Be prepared to read your position statement to the members of your class.

Part 4: The Verdict

Teen Wins Fight to Pick Hodgkin's Treatment

August 2006

The same day Abraham Cherrix's new trial was scheduled to begin, the parties reached an agreement that balanced a minor's autonomy with the need to protect the welfare of a minor. Abraham's decision was honored and he was allowed to refuse a second round of chemotherapy. He was also allowed to continue to treat his cancer with the Hoxsey method. However, he will be required to be treated by a board-certified radiation oncologist. This oncologist will not use chemotherapy. Instead, Abraham will be treated with immunotherapy and low-intensity radiation. The family will be required to report the status of Abraham's health and treatment to the court until the cancer is gone or until he is no longer a minor.

1. **Do you think that Adam should be required to undergo additional cancer treatment?** Write either "YES" or "NO" on the post-it note provided by your teacher. Place your post-it note on the new Topical Barometer Bar Graph.
2. Compare your answer to this question to the answer that you gave when we began this activity. Explain why your answer changed or remained the same.
3. Compare the answers to this question (second Topical Barometer) to the answers that the class made when we began this activity (first Topical Barometer). Explain some reasons why the class Topical Barometers changed or remained the same.