Policies and Procedures of Pacemaker Deactivation: Opportunities and Pitfalls (SA515)
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Objectives
- Recognize the practical and ethical controversies around pacemaker deactivation.
- Identify potential opportunities for collaboration, as well as potential conflict, when developing a policy for pacemaker deactivation.
- Review results of a national survey of hospital-based ethics committees regarding their experiences regarding pacemaker deactivation.
- Review proposed procedures for pacemaker deactivation as developed by a tertiary university-based hospital.

In the last several years, much has been written about the practical and ethical considerations regarding the deactivation of cardiac implantable electronic devices (CIEDs) in patients at the end of life. While deactivation of certain devices, such as implantable cardiac defibrillators, has become relatively common, other devices carry significantly more controversy and potential for conflict between patients and providers, as well as among medical professionals. Indeed, recent surveys have revealed that the majority of physicians remain uncomfortable discussing deactivate of CIEDs in general and pacemakers in particular.

We will begin this concurrent session with a case report of a family's distress when their request for pacemaker deactivation in a patient with terminal cancer was met with accusations of euthanasia, and then review the literature regarding consensus and opinions regarding pacemaker deactivation. We will detail the experiences of one university-based hospital's attempt to develop a policy for pacemaker deactivation with an emphasis on practical lessons learned. We will review the results of a national survey of hospital-based ethics committees regarding their experience with pacemaker deactivation. Finally, we will end with a proposed procedure to manage the potential symptoms associated with pacemaker deactivation in a patient at the end of life.