

“A Letter from the Children,” *The Journal of Clinical Ethics* 17, no. 4 (Winter 2006): 339.

## A Letter from the Children

24 August 2004

McLean Hospital  
115 Mill Street  
Belmont, MA 02478

To Whom It May Concern:

This letter is in reference to the care of “Margaret Smith,” a loving and caring person. Margaret is a mother and a friend to all of her children. She was there during the tough times when no one else was around. She was there to relish the glory of the good times as well. It was the little things that mattered to Margaret. The smile of her kids, the crafts that she made, in general it was the pleasing of others that truly made her happy. Even in the state she is in now you get a tiny glimpse into her world. The loving hug or maybe even a kiss if you are lucky. Now Margaret, the person we call Mom, is taking on the toughest battle to date. The frustration began almost eight years ago when she lost her job as a Registered Nurse at the Faulkner Hospital. She spent a large majority of her life trying to make people comfortable through the care that she provided. We would like to reciprocate and give her the comfort care that she now deserves.

As this disease wore on our Mom began to change. We were now the ones caring for her. We prepared the dinners. We drove her places. We paid the bills. For what seems like a short period we cared for our Mom the best way we knew how. Now she is taken care of at McLean Hospital, where it seems that nothing works. The list of medications that have been tried seems endless and with that it appears the distress on our Mom’s face grows. We can no longer ask her if she is feeling pain. The calling out, that everybody who comes into contact with her [experiences], has made it difficult for people to care for her. We often hear her voice as she was saying before things got so bad, “I do not want to go into a nursing home.” Other times she would cry and tell us that she “did not want to be a burden to us.” She didn’t see the fact that she was our Mom and we would always do what was in her best interest. She deserves better than what has happened so far.

As we walk around the halls of SB2, we fight back the tears. We know that she will not get better and our major concern is that this is no quality of life. Our mother would not want to be this way. Recently it was told to us that she has become aggressive, an element that was never a part of the makeup of Margaret Smith.

We as a family feel that our mother should be sedated in the interest of providing her with the best comfort care possible. We do not want her resuscitated nor do we [want her to be] treated with antibiotics or surgeries for any illness. We say this because we feel this is no quality of life for our Mom.

Sincerely,

“Paul Smith”

“Martha Smith”

“Mary Smith”

Note: Throughout this case, the names of the patient and her children have been changed. Quotation marks have been used around these changed names at their first appearance in an article. No other information has been masked or changed in this case. The information presented in this case is used with the permission of the patient’s children and the other parties involved.