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View of Death and Dying, and Other Medical Issues Through the Eyes of People in Different Religions

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SENIOR THESIS APPROVAL

This Honors thesis entitled

**“The View of Death and Dying, and Other Medical Issues,
Through the Eyes of People in Different Religions”**

written by

Kaylie Roberts

and submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for completion of
the Carl Goodson Honors Program
meets the criteria for acceptance
and has been approved by the undersigned readers.

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April 24, 2018

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Honors Thesis

**The View of Death and Dying, and Other Medical Issues, Through the Eyes of People in
Different Religions**

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Introduction

The process of dying, and death itself, is viewed quite differently among different religions. Other medical issues, including abortion and suicide, are also topics of debate and interest among the major religions of the world. In this thesis, five major religions are discussed: Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism. For the purpose of this thesis, Christianity was divided into two categories: Southern Baptist Convention and Roman Catholicism. Each religion has a vast amount of denominations or subgroups. However, for the information covered here, there is not a huge amount of variation among the subgroups of each religion. That is not to say that there is no variation. Each religion has subgroups for a reason; they view things alternatively from other adherents of that religion. Therefore, each religion could have multiple views on a topic; nevertheless, the information provided here is an overarching viewpoint for each religion. Some categories are, however, more applicable to certain religions. Some religions might not view a specific topic or category as critical to medical care and do not have a firm view on the matter.

The Southern Baptist Convention and Roman Catholicism were chosen as two subgroups of Christianity because of their popularity in this region of the country. Roman Catholicism is a major branch of Christianity, and the Southern Baptist Convention is one of the many Protestant denominations. Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, and Buddhism were selected because they are considered some of the major religions of the world, and because of their prevalence, outside of Christianity, in this region. Each religion is broken down into its views on various medical topics of the dying process, as well as abortion and suicide. The categories are the same for each religion. There are links at the end of each religion that can be used for further study.

This information is set up to be incorporated into a website for medical professionals. This website would allow people in the medical community to access information about specific religious traditions and rituals, for multiple major religions, all in one place. This would provide easy accessibility to important information about treatment options in the case of a patient with strict religious beliefs. A limitation of the information provided is that it does not cover each subgroup of each religion specifically. This could impose a lack of information in the case of a patient with very specific beliefs of a certain religion. Therefore, the information stated here is also meant to be added to and updated. This is by no means a final product. There are many more medical issues to be covered for each of these religions, as well as other religions not mentioned here.

The motivation for this thesis is the desire to pursue a career in the field of nursing. By taking a class on world religions, my eyes were opened to the vast array of beliefs among different religions throughout the world. Although these religions are primarily in certain areas and countries of the world, the five religions covered in this thesis are all represented in this region of the United States. Therefore, it is pertinent to be aware of these varying beliefs and be able to acknowledge them in the medical work place. A patient's beliefs are of utmost importance to them, and a medical professional should be respectful and considerate of those beliefs. One cannot do this if they are not aware. That is the focus of this thesis: to educate those in the medical field about the views and beliefs of the major religions of the world.

Southern Baptist Convention

Textual Authority: Bible

Traditions	
Hospice	Accepted
Dying in home versus hospital	Not an issue
Blood	Transfusions are an act of charity to help reduce the pain of others.
Who can touch the body	No particular beliefs
Hospital Visitation	Not an issue
Organ donation	·It is accepted, but there is no official position. ·It is a matter of personal conscience.
Intermediate state	No particular beliefs
Soul	·The body is a mortal housing for the soul. ·Death is when the soul leaves the body.
Religious leader present at funeral	Pastor
Text	Variety of Bible translations: King James version is popular
Conceptual teachings	Two views of afterlife: 1. Deceased enters Paradise immediately after death (Luke 23:43). 2. When the Second Coming of Jesus occurs, a trumpet will sound, and the dead will be resurrected and raised to Paradise (1 Corinthians 15:32).

Death Rituals	
General Rituals	No particular beliefs
Burial practices	·A burial is commonly scheduled 3-5 days after death, trying to avoid Sundays and religious holidays. ·The body may be buried before or after the funeral service.
Graveside service	Guests can attend. There is usually a brief Scripture reading and prayer, and then the casket is put into the ground.
Embalming	Accepted
Autopsy	There are no specific limitations, but the body should be handled with respect.
Cremation	Accepted
Visitation	A viewing is customary at a funeral home or church.

If there is no body	Information not found
If missing body parts	Information not found
Wake	A viewing is customary at funeral home or church.
Funeral location/service	The service typically lasts 30-60 minutes and usually occurs within one week of death. It takes place at a church or funeral home. A pastor performs the service. An open casket is common.
Eulogies	Accepted
Military rites/rituals	Fraternal, civil, or military rites/tributes should be conducted at the viewing rather than the funeral because the funeral is a religious event.
Location of cemeteries	Not an issue
Spiritual death	If a person is saved, then they will live with Jesus in Heaven for eternity.
Age when you die/enter Paradise	No particular beliefs
Mourning period	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·No specific mourning period or memorial events ·Mourners typically return to a normal work schedule after about one week. ·Mourners typically return to normal social schedule after about two months. ·Quiet commemorations among family members are common on the anniversary of the death.

Other Medical Issues	
Abortion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·Pro-life ·Oppose elective abortions ·It is viewed as a form of infanticide.
When does the fetus become a person	Life is sacred from conception until natural death.
Women's rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·There are no firm answers on exceptions due to rape/incest or to save the mother's life. ·"all human life is a sacred gift from our sovereign God and therefore ... all abortions, except in those very rare cases where the life of the mother is clearly in danger, are wrong."
Suicide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·It is viewed as self-murder. ·A person's family, doctors, and community should work to keep that person from taking their own life.

Physician-assisted suicide	It is viewed as a usurpation of God's entitlement.
Euthanasia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·There is general opposition to actions that may hasten death. ·There is an appropriate time to stop medical treatments. Medical treatments that are prolonging the dying process are not obligatory.

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Roman Catholicism

Textual Authority: Bible/Vatican

Traditions	
Hospice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·Accepted ·"the ordinary care owed to a sick person cannot be legitimately interrupted"
Dying in home versus hospital	Not an issue
Blood	Transfusions are an act of charity to help reduce the pain of others.
Who can touch the body	No particular beliefs
Hospital Visitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·During this time the "anointing of the sick" occurs: praying over sick person. ·Six parts of the body (eyes, ears, nostrils, lips, hands, feet) are covered with holy oils blessed by the bishop.
Organ donation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·It is accepted by the Vatican and viewed as an act of charity. ·Selling of organs for commercial use is immoral.
Intermediate state	No particular beliefs
Soul	Catechism 363: In Sacred Scripture the term "soul" often refers to human <i>life</i> or the entire human <i>person</i> . ²³⁰ But "soul" also refers to the innermost aspect of man, that which is of greatest value in him, ²³¹ that by which he is most especially in God's image: "soul" signifies the <i>spiritual principle</i> in man.
Religious leader present at funeral	Priest
Text	New American Standard Bible
Conceptual teachings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·Roman Catholicism recognizes the Pope and the Vatican as authority. ·When persons die, they are judged to go to Heaven, Hell, or Purgatory. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·Purgatory: "a process of purgation in which one's soul becomes purified from venial sins prior to Christ's second coming" ·Duration of time spent in Purgatory is related to the degree of sin. ·Those in Purgatory are referred to as "Holy Souls"

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·Before death, it is unsure of whether a person will go to Heaven or not. ·Mourners pray for the deceased to enter into Heaven. ·There are two types of judgment at death: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·Particular: determines fate of soul at death ·General: will occur when Christ returns ·Limbo: an intermediate state for those that die unbaptized and in a 'state of grace' <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·Babies that die unbaptized go into limbo: "eternal state of natural joy"
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Death Rituals	
General Rituals	Rosary beads are placed in the hands of the deceased.
Burial practices	No particular beliefs
Graveside service	A priest says Mass and prayers at graveside.
Embalming	It is accepted and practiced for a viewing or vigil.
Autopsy	It is accepted and viewed as an act of charity.
Cremation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·Cremation has been allowed since 1997. ·If cremated, one must be buried in a Catholic cemetery or mausoleum. ·A person cannot be scattered or stored at one's home.
Visitation	At the viewing, it is customary to kneel beside the casket and pray.
If there is no body	No particular beliefs
If missing body parts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·If possible, amputated limbs should be buried in a blessed place. ·If it is not possible, medical staff may dispose of the limbs.
Wake	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·At the viewing, it is customary to kneel beside the casket and pray. ·The second day after death is for the wake, which lasts one to two days.
Funeral location/service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·The service is called the Catholic Mass of the dead: "Mass of the Resurrection" ·It involves the eucharist, rosary, prayers, music, flowers, and procession to the cemetery.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·The rosary and prayers are meant to help the soul through purgatory. ·The Requiem Mass or funeral is held in a church or cathedral. ·It involves prayers, scripture reading, a sermon, and Holy Communion. ·A priest sprinkles the coffin with holy water. ·A Catholic funeral can be its own service, or part of Mass. ·A funeral normally occurs two to three days after death.
Eulogies	Eulogies are given at the viewing or after interment gatherings, because eulogies are not allowed at Requiem Mass.
Military rites/rituals	Patriotic or fraternal services may be conducted following the burial rite.
Location of cemeteries	If possible, one should be buried in a Catholic cemetery.
Spiritual death	One's soul can die through mortal sin because it is no longer united with God.
Age when you die/enter Paradise	Catechism 1023: Those who die in God's grace and friendship and are perfectly purified live forever with Christ.
Mourning period	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·7 days are allowed to mourn. ·There is a mass on the anniversary of the death.

Other Medical Issues	
Abortion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·Anti-abortion ·Does not condone abortion in any circumstances. ·Abortion is a form of murder. ·The only exception is when a medical procedure is needed that has the death of the embryo or fetus as an undesired and unintended side effect. ·A Right to Life Movement was founded by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops in 1968. ·Life begins at conception. ·It is a grievous sin that can lead to excommunication.

	·In the early church, abortion was not seen as murder because they believed that the soul was not present in the early stages of the fetus.
When does the fetus become a person	Life begins at conception.
Women's rights	·A baby should not be killed to save a mother, but a mother should not be killed to save a baby. ·A baby that is the result of rape should not be killed.
Suicide	·Suicide is a mortal sin. ·It is natural to preserve one's life. ·It violates a love for self and others. ·It defies the love we owe God.
Physician-assisted suicide	Strongly opposed
Euthanasia	Strongly opposed

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<https://www.catholiceducation.org/en/culture/catholic-contributions/the-sin-of-suicide.html>

Judaism

Textual Authority: Tanakh, Talmud

Traditions	
Hospice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·There are complex views on end-of-life care. ·A Rabbi should be contacted for advice.
Dying in home versus hospital	Not an issue
Blood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·It signifies the renewal of the covenant. ·If a blood transfusion is deemed medically necessary, then it is obligatory to receive it.
Who can touch the body	Modesty is important regarding treatment from someone of the opposite sex.
Hospital Visitation	Not an issue
Organ donation	Permitted
Intermediate state	No particular beliefs
Soul	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·The human soul is called <i>ruah</i>. ·A person is born with a pure soul.
Religious leader present at funeral	Rabbi
Text	Tanakh, Talmud
Conceptual teachings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·Four major Jewish religious movements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·Reform Judaism: Judaism is an ongoing process that has resulted from the relationship between God and the Jewish people throughout history. ·Reconstructionism: Judaism embodies a whole civilization, not just a religion. ·Conservative Judaism: New practices and ideas influence Jewish beliefs and rituals. ·Orthodox Judaism: The Torah was divinely revealed to Moses at Mount Sinai.

Death Rituals	
General Rituals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·There is no ultimate death, because both the soul and the body continue on. ·There is no escape from death. ·There are three uses of the word death in the Hebrew Bible: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Biological cessation 2. Power which opposes God's creation

	<p>3. Metaphor for anything which leads a person away from God</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Biological death occurs when the vital force (<i>ruah</i>) exits through the throat. · Life and death are not separate. · A person who shows signs of dying must be attended to constantly. · A dying person makes a confession and recites the <i>Shema</i>. · The body is never left unattended from death until the funeral. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · This is called <i>shomerim</i>. · The person watching the body cannot eat, drink, or perform commandment. · The mouth and eyes are closed, and the arms are extended to the side of the body. · The body is laid on the floor and covered, and candles are lit next to the body. · <i>Chevra kaddisha</i>: a volunteer organization to care for the dead
Burial practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · The body is washed and dressed in white linen. · The body is buried in a pine box as quickly as possible after death. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Holes are drilled into the box so that the body comes into contact with the earth. · Graves are marked with tombstones. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · They are usually unveiled 12 months after burial. · They are required by Jewish law.
Graveside service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · A Rabbi recites prayers and leads the family in the mourners' <i>kaddish</i>. · A traditional service includes: a procession to the grave, all present fill in the grave by putting one spadeful of earth into it, and the closest family members leave by walking between two rows of relatives and friends.
Embalming	Not practiced among Orthodox Jews
Autopsy	Discouraged
Cremation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Traditional Jewish law forbids it <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Not practiced among Orthodox Jews · Reform Jews allow it
Visitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · It is not proper to gaze at the dead. · There is never an open casket.

If there is no body	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·If possible, a witness is found to testify that the person is dead. ·Burial practices may proceed.
If missing body parts	Amputated limbs may be requested for burial.
Wake	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·It is not proper to gaze at the dead. ·There is never an open casket.
Funeral location/service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·It usually occurs the day after the death. ·Some Reform families allow the funeral two to three days after the death. ·It will take place at a synagogue/temple or a funeral home.
Eulogies	·They are typically delivered by a Rabbi, but they are sometimes delivered by a family member or friend.
Military rites/rituals	Military rites may be performed separate from the Jewish parts of the burial service, or they may be refused by the Rabbi.
Location of cemeteries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·Jews should be buried separate from non-Jews. ·Jewish cemeteries are preferred.
Spiritual death	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·Reform Judaism rejects bodily resurrection and physical life after death. It believes in immortality of every soul that will eventually return to God. ·Reconstructionism rejects bodily resurrection. It believes that when someone dies, their soul rejoins the universe. ·Conservative Judaism talks about the resurrection of the dead but does not specify if it will be physical or spiritual. ·Orthodox Judaism believes in bodily resurrection and a physical life after death. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·Equivalent of heaven: <i>olam ha'bah</i> ·Equivalent of hell: <i>Gehenna</i> ·Qualification for entrance into heaven: live one's life in accordance with God's law. ·If one willingly disobeys God's commandments, they are doomed to hell. ·The dead will be raised again with the coming of the Messiah. ·Judgment for one's conduct in life follows death.
Age when you die/enter Paradise	No specific beliefs
Mourning period	·Family sits in mourning for seven days after the funeral (<i>shiva</i>).

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·There is no entertainment, shaving, sex, or working. ·The mirrors in the home should be covered. ·One should burn a special memorial candle for seven days in memory of the deceased. ·Immediate family are to sit on small chairs or boxes. ·Immediate family wear a black ribbon and slippers or just socks. Men do not shave. ·Eleven months after the death of a parent or child, or 30 days after the death of other relatives, mourners attend a morning and evening service daily at a synagogue/temple and recite the mourners' <i>kaddish</i>. ·The anniversary of the death is called a <i>yahrzeit</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·Bereaved attend the service at a synagogue/temple. ·A candle is lit and burns for 24 hours. ·There is an unveiling of the tombstone on the first anniversary. ·Next-of-kin are expected to recite the <i>kaddish</i> regularly during the year of mourning. ·When a close relative hears of the death, it is traditional to tear one's clothing upon initial grief. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·Over one's heart for a parent; over the right side of one's chest for other relatives ·<i>Aninut</i> period: one to two days after the death before burial <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·The family is left alone. ·After burial, a relative prepares first meal: <i>se'udat havra'ah</i> (meal of condolence) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·It is for the family only and consists of eggs and bread. ·<i>Shloshim</i>: lasts 30 days after burial ·<i>Avelut</i>: observed only for a parent <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·Lasts for 12 months after burial
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Other Medical Issues

Abortion

· Reform, Reconstructionist, and Conservative Jews openly advocate for the right to safe and accessible abortions. Orthodox Jews are less unified on issue.

· The Torah forbids the taking of innocent life.

· It is only permitted for serious reasons.

· On a case by case basis, a decision is made after consulting with a rabbi.

· Views are more lenient during the first 40 days of pregnancy when the embryo is mere fluid.

· Reasons to forbid abortion:

1. Killing a fetus breaks God's command to populate the world.
2. Killing a fetus destroys something made in God's image.
3. Killing a fetus is wanton destruction of part of God's creation.
4. Killing a fetus destroys something that could become a being.
5. Killing a fetus is an unjustifiable act of wounding.
6. It is wrong to injure oneself.

· It is not considered murder.

· It is allowed under 5 circumstances:

1. Peril to the life and health of the mother. This includes both physical and mental well-being.
2. If a birth, or its complications, would result in the mother's death, the mother's life takes precedence.
3. Impregnation as the result of a Biblically forbidden relationship - e.g. rape, incest.
4. Impregnation as the result of adultery - due to the intolerable taint of "bastardy" with which the child would suffer. (No such taint applies to the child of an unmarried woman.)
5. Mental and physical defects in the fetus, or exposure to maternal illness,

	<p>that are incompatible with life and likely to cause a born child grievous suffering and/or certain early death.</p> <p>·In Israel, age is also a factor: if a woman is under legally marriageable age (17) or over the age of 40, abortion is allowed.</p>
When does the fetus become a person	A fetus is not considered to be a person until it is born.
Women's rights	<p>·Traditional teachings permit abortion as a means of safeguarding the life and well-being of the mother</p> <p>·The mother's life is more important than the fetus's.</p>
Suicide	Prohibited
Physician-assisted suicide	Prohibited
Euthanasia	Prohibited

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Islam

Textual Authority: Qur'an

Traditions	
Hospice	Once a person is considered brain stem dead, it is permissible to turn off the life support.
Dying in home versus hospital	Not an issue
Blood	<p>Any form of blood that flows out of the body is impure (<i>najas</i>).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·Islam censures its followers from consuming blood. ·The Qur'an and <i>Sunnah</i> are silent on the issue of blood transfusion. ·In ordinary circumstances, blood transfusion is forbidden (<i>haram</i>). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·It is part of the human body and impure. ·It is permissible when: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·There is an acute need for it (person will lose their life without it) ·The patient's recovery wouldn't be possible without it ·The donor has willingly consented to donate their blood ·There is no grave danger to the life or health of the donor ·The degree of success through the treatment is anticipated as high ·Storing blood in blood banks is permissible in order to take precautionary efforts to make sure there is available blood in times of need. ·It is preferable for a Muslim to avoid receiving blood from a non-Muslim.
Who can touch the body	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·A male should care for a male, and a female should care for a female. ·Modesty is important.
Hospital Visitation	Not an issue
Organ donation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·Opposed beliefs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·It goes against the sacredness of the human life/body. ·A man's organs are not his own but have been given to him as a trust. ·It is subjecting the human body to material ends. ·Favored beliefs:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·It is seen as an act of public welfare and altruism. ·Non-Muslim organs should be used only: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·If no Muslim organs are available ·If a Muslim's life would be in danger without the transplant ·There are controversial views about brain stem dead donors.
Intermediate state	Limbo: punishment in the tomb while awaiting heaven or hell
Soul	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·Life is a preparation for the soul to pass through death, and then be ready to progress in the life after death. ·Death occurs when the soul is separated from the body <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·Soul: <i>ruh</i> or <i>nafs</i> ·The body carries out the dictates of the soul.
Religious leader present at funeral	Imam
Text	Qur'an
Conceptual teachings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·Day of Reckoning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·All people will be called to give account for their actions.

Death Rituals	
General Rituals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·If someone shows signs of dying: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·The person is positioned on their back with their head facing Mecca. ·Perfume the room ·Anyone who is unclean, or menstruating should clear the room ·The dying person recites <i>suras</i> from the Qur'an ·The basic creed of Islam is recited ·Once the person is dead: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·The mouth and eyes are closed ·The feet are tied together ·The body is covered with a sheet ·It is unlawful to recite from the Qur'an near the deceased. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·A prayer is said ·The body is cleaned, perfumed, and wrapped in white cotton by family members.

Burial practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·Prayers for the dead are performed by people present. ·Only a standing position is allowed. ·The deceased is placed in a plain wooden coffin and carried to the place of burial. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·A prayer is repeated as the body is carried. ·the body is taken from the coffin and placed into a six-foot-deep grave. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·Everyone present covers the body with flowers and dirt, and pours blessed rose water over it.
Graveside service	<i>Janazah</i> prayers for the dead are recited.
Embalming	Not practiced
Autopsy	Not encouraged
Cremation	Never allowed
Visitation	A viewing is not usual since burial typically happens immediately after death.
If there is no body	Information not found
If missing body parts	Amputated limbs may be requested for burial
Wake	A viewing is not usual since burial typically happens immediately after death.
Funeral location/service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·Should happen immediately ·Usually takes place within 24 hours after death ·It takes place in a funeral home or in the general-purpose room of the mosque. ·There is never an open casket.
Eulogies	They are not common, but they are allowed.
Military rites/rituals	No information found
Location of cemeteries	Muslims should be buried in Muslim cemeteries.
Spiritual death	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·There is a second birth/“new creation” for believers and a second death/“eternal death” for unbelievers. ·Day of Judgment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·There will be a barrier (<i>barzakh</i>) that separates the land of the living from the dead. ·The soul begins a period of waiting for judgment. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·Traditional: Once the soul is separated from body, it begins a journey up to heaven. The soul is escorted by the angel Gabriel through the seven

	<p>levels of heaven. The goal is to reach a vision of God. The soul returns to the grave to wait for judgment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·The dead will rise from their graves and be judged based on their good and bad deeds. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·Unbelievers will be cast into a roaring flame. ·Believers will inherit paradise (<i>aljanat</i>) forever. ·The resurrected are sorted into three classes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·Companions of the Right Hand: righteous people ·Companions of the Left Hand: people who suffer because of their sins ·Foremost in Faith: spiritually advanced people ·Dying to self is called <i>fana</i>. ·The body and soul will unite on the day of resurrection.
Age when you die/enter Paradise	No particular beliefs
Mourning period	Religiously mandated not to exceed 40 days

Other Medical Issues	
Abortion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·Some allow abortion in the first 16 weeks of pregnancy. ·Some allow abortion in the first 7 weeks of pregnancy. ·Even though abortion is wrong, it is not a punishable wrong. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·The longer the pregnancy goes before abortion, the more it is wrong. ·The Qur'an does not explicitly refer to abortion, but it talks about other related issues that people use for abortion. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·Sanctity of life: The fetus is protected by Islam as human life. ·In regard to providing for the child, do not abort the child because of fear of not being able to care for it; trust <i>Allah</i>. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·Do not abort based on social and financial grounds.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·Abortion is permitted before 120 days if the fetus has a defect that cannot be treated. ·Abortion is permitted if the baby will have such deformities that will deprive it of a normal life. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·The opinion of two medical specialists is required. ·Abortion is not allowed when an unwanted pregnancy is caused by unforced adultery. ·Life begins at conception and is created by God. ·The unborn baby has rights: care, protection, life.
When does the fetus become a person	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·At four months, the fetus becomes a living soul. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·Abortion is not allowed after this. ·Varying views on when the soul (<i>Ruh</i>) is given to the fetus during pregnancy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·120 days ·40 days ·The first voluntary movement of the fetus in the 12th week of gestation
Women's rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·Abortion is only allowed before four months when the mother's life is in danger or because of rape. ·In regard to protection of mother's life: <i>Sharia</i> (Muslim law) talks about the lesser of two evils. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·Save the mother before the baby because it is the lesser of two evils.
Suicide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·God alone decides how long someone will live and when they will die. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·There are hesitations of ending life prematurely. ·Islam forbids suicide ·One has to draw a line between martyrdom and seeking death. ·Taking a life is <i>haram</i>. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·This refers only to fully formed humans, not a fetus.
Physician-assisted suicide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·Opposed ·It is a sin to take a life.
Euthanasia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·Opposed ·It is a sin to take a life. ·Suffering could be beneficial.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·One might need to go through difficulty to test their faith. ·End-of-life suffering is a way to purify previous sins, so that when a person meets God he/she is in a purer state. ·If a person is terminally ill, one does not have to go to extreme measures to prolong life.
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Hinduism

Textual Authority: Vedas

Traditions	
Hospice	Family members should make decisions for the patient.
Dying in home versus hospital	There may be a strong desire for death to occur in the home rather than in the hospital.
Blood	Donating blood is accepted and is a way to pass on karma to the person that receives the blood.
Who can touch the body	Modesty is very important regarding treatment by someone of the opposite sex.
Hospital Visitation	A Hindu patient may have a large number of visitors.
Organ donation	Individual's decision
Intermediate state	No particular beliefs
Soul	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · <i>atman</i> (individual soul) has no beginning and no end <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · When the body dies, the Self does not. · <i>Brahman</i>: the One, All-Encompassing soul · A person experiences two births after physical birth: when practicing external sacrificial rituals, and when the person dies internally. · <i>Jiva</i>: "subtle body" or essential self/soul that survives death <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · "form of a man the size of a thumb" · The sacrificial circulation of souls: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · The soul becomes <i>soma</i> (cremation fire carries soul to heaven where it becomes the sacrificial liquid), <i>soma</i> becomes rain, rain becomes food, food becomes semen, semen produces a new body that the soul takes into the next life.
Religious leader present at funeral	Monk
Text	Vedas
Conceptual teachings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · There is no founder and no common creed or doctrine. · God is within being and object in the universe and transcends every being and object. · The essence of each soul is divine.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·The purpose of life is to become aware of the divine essence. ·<i>Yama</i>: King of Death <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·He prepares a resting place for the dead. ·Death is ever-present within the body and in the world at every moment. ·While the gross and the subtle bodies change and die, the True Self of each person is undying. ·In order to realize the True Self, one must die to fears about living and dying. ·The only teacher about death is Death itself. ·Through the art of wholehearted and disciplined surrender, one attains immortality while yet alive. ·Death is natural and unavoidable, but it is not real. ·The death of one's physical body is inevitable and is not to cause prolonged grief. ·The subtle dimension of the person does not die at death, rather takes on a new body. ·The Eternal Self is birthless and deathless and cannot be destroyed. ·One who realizes the Eternal self while yet alive will not be reborn but, at death, will merge with <i>Brahman</i>. ·Death is a practical necessity for the sustaining of life. ·Death is used as an incentive to keep people focused on religion. If there is death, people will behave and practice religion to try and be saved from it. ·Regard birth and death as equal.
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Death Rituals	
General Rituals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·The spiritual practices or yogas that, when mastered, prepare one for death: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·<i>Jnana yoga</i>: intellectual, intuitive, metaphysical mediation; the way of knowledge, the single-minded awareness of the Eternal Self ·<i>Karma yoga</i>: physical, self-sacrificial, detached activity

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·<i>Bhakti yoga</i>: emotional, self-surrendering devotion to the divine ·One's final thoughts determine the first moments of the after-death experience. ·A dying person is surrounded by religious rites and ceremonies which support them throughout the death process. ·Before death, the son and relatives put water, from the Ganges, into the dying person's mouth. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·This assures the family that the person will receive a blessing from the Ganges that will bring peace. ·Family and friends sing devotional prayers and chant <i>Vedic mantras</i>. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·A monk recites <i>mantras</i> to try and revive the person. ·The body is washed, anointed, and given new or clean clothes. The hair and beard are trimmed.
Burial practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·The people who carry the body to the cremation ground chant verses. ·The body is placed on a funeral pyre. ·If a man died, the widow sits in a vigil beside him, and is asked to rise up. ·The eldest son walks around the pyre three times, pouring sacred water on the body. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·He then sets fire to the wood with a torch that has been blessed. ·Three fires ignite the body.
Graveside service	In accordance with the events of the funeral pyre.
Embalming	Accepted
Autopsy	It is avoided, but one should comply if necessary by law.
Cremation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·Bodies are always cremated because it is most spiritually beneficial to the departed soul. ·The skull is cracked in order to free the soul.
Visitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·One may view the body without touching. ·This takes place before the cremation.
If there is no body	The funeral rituals may take place in the same way as if there was a body.
If missing body parts	Information not found
Wake	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·One may view the body without touching. ·This takes place before the cremation.

Funeral location/service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·Usually takes place within 24 hours of the death ·There is no concept of a funeral home, so the body stays at the home until taken to the place of cremation. ·The ceremony takes place at the place of cremation. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·Called <i>mukhagni</i> ·A last food offering is symbolically made to the deceased. ·There is always an open casket before the cremation.
Eulogies	Information not found
Military rites/rituals	Information not found
Location of cemeteries	After cremation, ashes are scattered in a river.
Spiritual death	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·The <i>atman</i> may pass into another reincarnation. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·This depends on the person's karma during their previous lifetimes. ·Over many lifetimes, if the <i>atman</i> realizes the true nature of reality, it will become one with <i>Brahman</i>. ·<i>Samsara</i>: the endless cycle of birth, death, and rebirth ·The secret of death is to realize the Supreme Self hidden in one's heart. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·this can be attained by meditation and grace, and by those whom the Self chooses. ·<i>Moksha</i>: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·Takes a person out of life's <i>karma</i> ·A person becomes immortal ·One's escape (liberation) from the endless cycle of birth and death and birth and death ·The activation of <i>Samadhi</i> or emptiness; the void or nothingness which is also absolute fullness and compassion ·A liberation from the effects of the reincarnational cycle at death, and a return to full identification with <i>Atman</i>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Those who die without knowledge of the Self are reborn or return to a lower state based on their <i>karma</i>. · As long as the physical body is visible, the soul remains close by for days or months. · Judgment occurs upon death. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Whichever outweighs the other (good or evil) will determine the person's afterlife. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Good: heaven · Evil: hell
Age when you die/enter Paradise	No specific beliefs
Mourning period	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · <i>shradda</i>: A ceremony that occurs 10 days after death for members of the Brahman caste, and 30 days after death for members of other castes. · Rituals are performed by a priest on the anniversary of the death. · When mourners return home, they are to ceremonially wash themselves, recite <i>mantras</i>, and offer a libation at the family altar. This is continued for ten days · Three days after death, the oldest son goes back to the cremation spot and takes the remaining bones and buries them or casts them into a river. · Rituals of giving continue for one year in efforts to transform the spirit (<i>preta</i>) into an ancestor (<i>pitr</i>).

Other Medical Issues	
Abortion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · This is condemned because it is thought to violate Hinduism's teachings of nonviolence, <i>Garha-batta</i> (womb killing). · A person should choose the action that will do the least harm to all involved. · Classical texts strongly oppose abortion.
When does the fetus become a person	The soul and matter that form the fetus are joined together from conception.
Women's rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Abortion is allowed if the mother's health is at risk. · The mother is more important than the fetus.
Suicide	· Prematurely ending life could negatively impact a person's <i>karma</i> .

	<p>·Religious suicide: Someone who has already “died to the world” can give up their physical body to obtain salvation.</p> <p>·<i>Sati</i>: The self-sacrifice of a widow who follows her husband to the afterlife by entering into her own funeral pyre.</p>
Physician-assisted suicide	<p>There are two opposing views:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Helping end a painful life is seen as a good deed. <p>Helping end a life disturbs the timing of death and could affect the <i>karma</i> of the doctor and patient.</p>
Euthanasia	<p>There are two opposing views:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Helping end a painful life is seen as a good deed. 3. Helping end a life disturbs the timing of death and could affect the <i>karma</i> of the doctor and patient.

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Buddhism

Textual Authority: texts vary depending on sect

Traditions	
Hospice	During care, a Buddhist will want quiet and calm.
Dying in home versus hospital	If in a hospital, staff should avoid disturbing the patient's concentration/meditation in preparation of dying.
Blood	There are no objections to blood donations or transfusions, as long as they are given freely.
Who can touch the body	Modesty is important regarding treatment by someone of the opposite sex.
Hospital Visitation	No specific beliefs
Organ donation	This is a matter of individual conscience.
Intermediate state	<p>·Tibetan Buddhism: three stages of the <i>bardo</i>:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Consciousness of the dying person fuses with and incorporates into absolute "suchness" of the universe. It abandons all elements of self-consciousness and personal identification. 2. Consciousness takes on a mentally created body that mirrors the once had physical body. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Buddhas appear that the consciousness can identify with and attain a state of spiritual oneness with. 3. Consciousness assumes a physical, yet subtle, body. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. It is judged by the lord of death based on actions in the previous life. <p>·While in this state, a person can be affected by actions from those it left behind.</p> <p>·A spiritually advanced person can directly help the deceased by guiding them through the <i>bardo</i>: give advice and encouragement, carry out rituals.</p>
Soul	There is no belief in an eternal soul.
Religious leader present at funeral	Monk
Text	Varies depending on sect
Conceptual teachings	·The Four Noble Truths:

1. All life (birth, aging, death) is suffering.
2. Suffering is caused by craving or desire.
3. Cessation of suffering is possible.
4. The Noble Eightfold Path can lead to the extinction of suffering.

·The Noble Eightfold Path:

1. Right understanding of the nature of reality
2. Right thought, which is free from sensuous desire, ill will and cruelty
3. Right speech, which should be absent of falsehoods, harsh words and useless chatter
4. Right action, which includes refraining from killing, stealing and wrong conduct in matters of bodily pleasure, intoxicants and gambling
5. Right livelihood, which forbids any conduct contrary to right speech and right action and any trickery or fraud in the service of commerce or one's trade
6. Right effort, which seeks to avoid generating new, unwholesome actions and encourages purifying the mind (by avoiding and overcoming unwholesome states of mind, while developing and maintaining wholesome states)
7. Right mindfulness, or meditative practices that encourage greater alertness and awareness of one's self
8. Right concentration or striving for mental "one-pointedness"; Right effort and right mindfulness together develop right concentration and vice versa.

Death Rituals

General Rituals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·If a person dies in panic, fright, uncertainty, or anxiety, Buddhists believe that an unpleasant rebirth could result. ·When a person is on their death bed, they are surrounded by their family friends, and monks. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·Monks recite scriptures (<i>sutras</i>) and repeat <i>mantras</i> to help the dying person achieve a peaceful state of mind. ·This continues until death, and then after death. ·Burmese village Buddhists: Male members wash the body. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·The body is wrapped in burial clothes. ·Thumbs and big toes are tied together with hair from a deceased member of the family. ·A coin is placed inside the mouth and at the head of the deceased. ·A vase holding a flower is placed so the deceased can still worship Buddha. ·Until cremation, family and friends pay respects without any outward signs of sympathy. ·The body is never left alone. ·Relatives do all the cooking. ·Men gamble in the room where the body lies. ·On the seventh day after death, monks are invited to the house to chant from sacred texts. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·This is to drive away the ghost of the dead and to confer merit upon the soul of the dead person.
Burial practices	A monk or family member leads chants before the casket is placed into the grave.
Graveside service	Prayers are recited, and the body is committed to the ground.
Embalming	Accepted
Autopsy	A form of compassion that helps preserve life
Cremation	Accepted

Visitation	If there is a viewing, the room should be quiet and peaceful. The body should be in everyday clothing and in a simple casket.
If there is no body	Information not found
If missing body parts	Information not found
Wake	If there is a viewing, the room should be quiet and peaceful. The body should be in everyday clothing and in a simple casket.
Funeral location/service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · There are three components of a funeral ceremony: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Sharing 2. The practice of good conduct 3. Developing a calm mind/meditation · The ceremony takes place at a funeral home with prayers and eulogies. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Japanese Buddhist tradition · It usually occurs within one week of death. · A person may have up to three ceremonies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Cambodian, Thai, and Ceylonese traditions · The first ceremony is within two days after death at the home of the bereaved. · The second ceremony is within two to five days after death at a funeral home. · The third ceremony is seven days after burial or cremation at the home of the bereaved or a temple. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Time of “merit transference” · There is always an open casket.
Eulogies	Accepted
Military rites/rituals	These may be performed at the wake.
Location of cemeteries	Information not found
Spiritual death	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Each individual pass through many reincarnations until he/she is liberated from worldly illusions and passions. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · When this happens, that person has entered <i>nirvana</i>. · A person enters a new incarnation immediately after death.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·The resulting being is not fully recognized for 9 months, like entering the womb of a woman. ·Burmese Buddhists: The conscious soul stays in or around the body for up to three days.
Age when you die/enter Paradise	No specific beliefs
Mourning period	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·There is a memorial service 90 days after death. · There is a “merit transference” ceremony one year after death.

Other Medical Issues	
Abortion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·No official position ·Many Buddhists believe that life begins at conception and that killing is morally wrong. ·In Japan, abortion is commonly practiced and often involves the Buddhist tradition of <i>mizuko jizo</i> (aborted fetuses are thought to go to the land of the dead). ·Dalai Lama has spoken in favor of abortion under certain circumstances: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·The child will be retarded ·Birth will create serious problems for the mother ·Abortion has been traditionally rejected, but modern Buddhists are more divided. ·The decision to abort is highly personal. ·According to the teachings of Buddha, 5 conditions must be present to constitute an act of killing: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The thing killed must be a living being. 2. The killer must know or be aware that it is a living being. 3. One must have the intention to kill it. 4. There must be an effort to kill. 5. The being must be killed as the result. ·It is viewed as bad <i>karma</i> for the fetus.
When does the fetus become a person	No specific beliefs
Women’s rights	Involves weighing of benefit and harm
Suicide	It is morally wrong to destroy human life.
Physician-assisted suicide	Opposed

Euthanasia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ·Opposed ·One does not need to go to extraordinary measures to preserve a dying person's life.
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Conclusion

This thesis has supplied a vast amount of information that was previously unknown to me. My knowledge of religions and beliefs other than my own has come full circle. The interest to go into the profession of nursing has drastically increased due to this research. The desire to encounter and care for patients from various cultures and beliefs is there. There is a dire need for understanding of religious views in healthcare. Patients cannot be treated properly if the medical community is not informed about their beliefs and traditions. That is why this thesis was created. It is not easy to access all this information in a matter of minutes on the internet. It takes time to research each of these topics in detail. A doctor that is caught off guard by a patient with strict beliefs does not have the time to sit down and search for the answers. The doctor needs to know what course of action to take to treat the patient. That is where this resource comes into play. If the doctor can go to one website and find all the answers, the treatment process can go a lot faster.

However, to reiterate a previous point, this resource does not cover every medical topic out there. This information is the beginning point of an ongoing research project. That is why there are supplemental books and websites; there is much more to be done. As I move forward toward becoming a nurse, my experience in the field will grow. I will learn something new each time I encounter another patient that has specific religious beliefs. This gives me an opportunity to continually add to and update this resource. If I continue with this information, and expand to cover more religions, in enough time I will have what is needed to create a website. This will increase my personal knowledge, as well as the knowledge of the healthcare field in general. This information is by no means for personal use; the sole purpose is to increase awareness and knowledge for the entire medical community, so that patients everywhere can receive the care they deserve.

Knowing information about how different religions view medical procedures and treatments is one thing; knowing how to ask and implement those beliefs is another. It will not always be easy to find out if a patient has certain restrictions. The best thing that a medical professional can do is ask the patient. All the questions doctors have can be answered by the patient. If a nurse is unsure of how a patient views a certain procedure, that nurse should just ask the patient. This is the easiest way to ensure that the patient is receiving the best care possible. After finding out a patient's religious preference, it is important for medical staff to let the patient know that they are aware and knowledgeable of his/her medical beliefs and preferences. This will make the patient feel valued and more comfortable. By using this resource, medical professionals can gain more than just knowledge. They can gain trust with their patients. Their patients will know that their doctors and nurses understand their beliefs and want to honor them in the best way possible. This is the future of healthcare.