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Canadian judge to rule on Jew facing euthanasia

By JUDY SIEGEL-ITZKOVICH

A Canadian judge is due to decide this week whether to renew a temporary injunction against Winnipeg's Grace General Hospital, whose doctors want to detach an 84-year-old Orthodox Jew from a respirator and hasten his death, against his family's wishes.

However, it was learned Sunday that the patient, Samuel Golubchuk, regained consciousness several days ago and appears to be improving.

Although a [hospital](#) doctor treating Golubchuk wrote "Awoke" on his chart, the hospital did not disclose this to the court. The family said the hospital had been trying to make the patient appear to be dying and with minimal brain function. Grace General Hospital has received the backing of the Canadian Medical Association in its efforts to bring about active euthanasia.

According to the chart, which the judge was not apparently not shown, the supposedly "imminently dying" Golubchuk is not only awake but has interacted with people and made purposeful movements.

The case has aroused anger and [anxiety](#) within the North American Jewish community that it will set a precedent for doctors to have exclusive power over life and death decisions. Rabbinical and community leaders worry that budget-conscious hospital systems may decide to shorten patients' lives to save money or to free up beds.

The US **Association of Orthodox Jewish Scientists** discussed the case at its annual meeting in New York two weeks ago, and passed a resolution expressing grave concern about this case. Agudath Israel of America has also expressed concern.

Prof. Shimon Glick, a leading Israeli medical ethics expert and former dean of Ben-Gurion University's [Health Sciences](#) Faculty, said: "From a halachic point of view, removing a feeding tube from a patient who has any brain function is active euthanasia, equivalent to murder... But here, in addition, unless the patient has specifically indicated by advance directive that such is his desire, one has a violation of the patient's autonomy, as well."

A Grace General Hospital lawyer told the court that [doctors](#) "have the sole right to make decisions about treatment - even if it goes against a patient's religious beliefs."