

Hope for the dying

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Professor, author and bioethicist Arthur L. Caplan of New York University School of Medicine will give a lecture titled “The Ethics of Compassion: Requests for Unapproved Drugs and the Right to Try” on Sept. 26 at the Tulane University School of Medicine.

Experimental drugs might offer a terminally ill patient another chance to live, or live longer.

But outside of clinical trials, such drugs are hard to acquire and surrounded by murky legal and ethical issues of patient access and priority and company liability.

On Wednesday, Sept. 26, at noon, the Program in Medical Ethics and Human Values of Tulane School of Medicine will present a lecture by Arthur L. Caplan, the Drs. William F. and Virginia Connolly Mitty Professor of Bioethics at New York University School of Medicine. The lecture titled “The Ethics of Compassion: Requests for Unapproved Drugs and the Right to Try” will take place in the first-floor auditorium of the Tulane University School of Medicine, 1430 Tulane Ave. The lecture is free and open to the public. RSVPs may be made in advance by emailing tulanemedicaethics@tulane.edu. Lunch is served on a first-come, first-served basis.

On the surface, it might seem like a kindness to provide a dying patient with hope in the form of a potentially lifesaving drug, device or therapy, even if it has a minimal chance of success.

But physicians and ethicists grapple with the risks associated with advocating for and prescribing unapproved drugs; the companies that research and produce those drugs face mounting pressures, such as who pays for the treatment, emotionally charged social media campaigns or backlash, or the risk of a compromised FDA approval process.

“The overall goal [of the lecture] is to heighten awareness that all healthcare providers have social agency responsibilities when it comes to clinical research, and that by our reflection and introspection we can mitigate harm to patients, while enhancing their health care,” said [David J. Doukas, MD, the James A. Knight Chair of Humanities and Ethics in Medicine](#) and Director of the Program in Medical Ethics and Human Values at Tulane University School of Medicine.

Caplan, who also co-chairs the NYU School of Medicine [Working Group on Compassionate Use and Pre-Approval Access](#), will later address students, residents, and faculty on Sept. 26 from 2–3 p.m. on the “Ethical Lessons of Face Transplants for Injured Veterans and Others” at Southeast Louisiana Veterans Health Care System, 2400 Canal St., first-floor auditorium, Q Building.

Caplan’s lecture is part of the J. Richard Williams Sr, MD, 1931 lecture, which seeks to enhance the School of Medicine community in the area of humanism and health.

RSVP for the event at www.facebook.com/ProMedEthx or by emailing tulanemedicaethics@tulane.edu.