



Written by [Selwyn Duke](#) on January 9, 2015

State to Teenager: Undergo Chemotherapy — or Else

“My body, my choice!” may be a well-known rallying cry, but, increasingly, outside the realm of abortion it goes out the window. And the latest attack on this front involves a 17-year-old Connecticut teen told that she will undergo chemotherapy — whether she likes it or not. Fox CT [reported](#) on the story Monday:



She’s only identified as “Cassandra C.” in [court papers](#) to protect her privacy, but the 17-year-old’s case could soon become known nationwide.

Cassandra was diagnosed with cancer in September 2014. Doctors said she had Hodgkins Lymphoma, a rare condition — not to be confused with non-hodgkins lymphoma. Physicians recommended chemotherapy.

But the teen refused the treatment, and her mother supported that decision.

According to the National Cancer Institute, [side effects of chemo](#) can include hair loss, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, fatigue and pain.

This decision didn’t sit well with the Connecticut Department of Children and Families (DCF). As BenSwann.com [explains](#):

Following a hearing at which Cassandra’s doctors testified, the trial court ordered that she be removed from her home and that she remain in DCF’s care and custody,” read court papers according to CBS Connecticut. “The court also authorized DCF to make all necessary medical decisions on Cassandra’s behalf.”

Cassandra ran away from the hospital she was placed in shortly after she had received the first two chemo-treatments.

The case then went to the Connecticut Supreme Court, and just yesterday that body upheld the lower court ruling, saying that state officials weren’t violating the girl’s rights. The court apparently accepted the state’s argument, FoxNews.com [reported](#), that “the teen lacked competency extended to maturity and that they did not believe she understood the severity of her prognosis.”

Yet this doesn’t appear true. As the Associated Press [told us](#) just yesterday:

Cassandra told The Associated Press in an exclusive interview from her hospital it disgusts her to have “such toxic harmful drugs” in her body and she’d like to explore alternative treatments. She said by text she understands “death is the outcome of refusing chemo” but believes in “the quality of my life, not the quantity.”

“Being forced into the surgery and chemo has traumatized me,” Cassandra wrote in her text. “I do believe I am mature enough to make the decision to refuse the chemo, but it shouldn’t be about maturity, it should be a given human right to decide what you want and don’t want for your own body.”



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The AP also reports that currently “Cassandra is confined in a room at Connecticut Children’s Medical Center in Hartford, where she’s being forced to undergo chemotherapy, which doctors said would give her an 85 percent chance of survival. Without it, they said, there was a near certainty of death within two years.”

Whether or not Cassandra’s decision is prudent, there are contradictions reflected in this story. The attorney representing the girl, Michael S. Taylor, points out a few, arguing “that in a state where you can drive at age 16, have an abortion without parental consent before age 18 and be charged as ‘an adult’ if you commit a crime under 18, that a 17-year-old should have control over his ... own body.” One might add that Connecticut also allows 17-year-olds to vote in primaries and caucuses and to consent to sexual activity.

But most relevant here are the contradictions involving life and limb and death. Expanding on the matter of abortion, a 17-year-old Connecticut mother may decide to kill her unborn daughter. But if that child is born, the state will say her mother may not even decide to withhold a medical treatment if doing so may lead to the same outcome as abortion — even if the child is 17 herself and agrees. Of course, one factor is the same under both scenarios: The child’s say in the matter is irrelevant.

In fact, and as is common now, Connecticut also has a child safety-seat law. This means that while you can kill an infant in the womb, you may not even accept a somewhat higher risk with respect to his life when situating him in the family sedan during his first ride as a newborn.

As Fox CT pointed out, however, Cassandra’s case may soon be known nationwide — and it or a similar case should eventually reach the U.S. Supreme Court. This is especially likely, one would think, because other courts confronted with minors refusing treatment have ruled differently than the Connecticut Supreme Court. As Vox.com [wrote](#) on Thursday:

Many instances of minors turning away cancer care come from religious or spiritual beliefs. Young Jehovah’s Witnesses have refused life-saving treatments because of their religious beliefs, and courts have respected those decisions. In 2007, 14-year-old Dennis Lindberg [died of leukemia](#) after refusing to undergo life-saving blood transfusions. As a Jehovah’s Witness, he didn’t want to receive blood as the practice is banned in the faith. In that case, a judge ruled Lindberg had the right to make that decision for himself.

... Sarah Hershberger, a 10-year-old Amish girl living in Ohio, refused further treatment for her leukemia in 2013 after her first of multiple rounds of chemo. Her father told CBS the family believes in modern medicine to an extent, but at that point in Sarah’s treatment, it was time to stop and try something else. The hospital took the family to court, which led to an appointed guardian making Hershberger’s medical decisions. The Hershbergers went into hiding to avoid the forced chemotherapy. When this happened, the guardian [asked the court](#) to allow her to stop trying to force Sarah to return to chemo treatments, a request the court granted.

With all this state intrusion and its attendant contradictions, what are we to think? Perhaps a citizen might conclude, to use a twist on a Rodney Dangerfield line, that our government really cares — about what, we have no idea.



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