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MEDICAL COUNCIL TO RELEASE RULES ON END-OF-LIFE CARE

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INDIAN Council for Medical Research (ICMR) will release a comprehensive document on end-of-life care on Monday that will play a significant role in implementing the Supreme Court Friday ruling on "living will".

Officials in the country's top health research authority said that the report, to be released in Bengaluru, will define over 25 terminologies related to end-of-life care.

"The council had earlier planned to release it next month but it's being done immediately now after the SC ruling as it is extremely important that people—particularly the medical community and doctors—become aware of the terminology related to end-of-life care," said a senior ICMR official. "This report will provide clarity on the terms used in providing end-of-life care, which are not understood and not well defined. The document will be used forming



the processes that emanate out of the law on palliative care."

The council took over 15 months to frame the report in which recommendations from over 50 experts—including those of critical care specialists, bio-ethicists, palliative care experts, researchers and doctors—were incorporated.

"The document is extremely important in the Indian context as the terminology used here, even in the Friday's Court verdict, is outdated and does not

conform to the glossary used in other countries," said R K Mani, a critical care specialist who was instrumental in drafting the ICMR report.

"The word euthanasia is not used anywhere in the world now as it means the intentional act of killing a dying patient by the direct intervention of a doctor for the purpose of good of the patient. However, allowing natural death, withholding and withdrawing of life sustaining treatment to limit harm and suffering in a dying patient should not be construed as euthanasia," Mani explained.

Likewise, terms like "patient autonomy", "terminal illness" and "social justice" have also been elaborated upon in the report so that there is greater clarity on the subject.

"It is important that medical practitioners and people get updated with this area of health-care as one fundamental barrier to proper end-of-life care in India is the lack of clarity on terms that are often mistaken for euthanasia," said a palliative care expert from Hyderabad involved in making the report.

The report was also submitted to the Supreme Court in November last year.



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R K Mani, critical care specialist involved with drafting the ICMR report