

Orleans Doctors "Put Down" Terminal Patients at Height of Flood

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PEJ News - C. L. Cook - George W. Bush arrives in Louisiana today as revelations of further horrors during the flood that followed hurricane Katrina's August 30 landfall are becoming known. Doctors, caught between the rising waters and drug seeking hospital looters, were forced to make "unbearable" decisions during the evacuation.

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C. L. Cook

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Australia's [Daily Telegraph reports](#) , Doctors faced with a deteriorating situation in a New Orleans' hospital administered lethal doses of morphine to patients they believed terminal and suffering. Euthenasia is illegal in the state of Louisiana, and doctors spoke on condition of anonymity, but their stories have been corroborated by an emergency worker in the hospital at the time.

William Forest McQueen, a utilities worker in neighbouring Abita Springs, said: "Those who had no chance of making it were given a lot of morphine and lain down in a dark place to die."

The doctor in question agonized over her decisions in accounts, saying: "I didn't know if I was doing the right thing," ..

"But I did not have time. I had to make snap decisions, under the most appalling circumstances, and I did what I thought was right. I injected morphine into those patients who were dying and in agony. If the first dose was not enough, I gave a double dose. And at night I prayed to God to have mercy on my soul."

She says she finally left the hospital, fearing she would be set upon by reputed gangs of armed looters and rapists, adding that, she did not believe her actions murder, but compassion for dying patients she didn't believe would survive the disaster.

"This was not murder, this was compassion. They would have been dead within hours, if not days," she said.

At the height of the crisis, hospital staff set up triage, dividing patients into three groups as in standard in emergencies involving great numbers of victims. McQueen described the scene: "We divided the hospital's patients into three categories: Those who were traumatised but medically fit enough to survive, those who needed urgent care, and the dying. People would

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find it impossible to understand the situation. I had to make life-or-death decisions in a split second. It came down to giving people the basic human right to die with dignity. There were patients with 'do not resuscitate' signs. Under normal circumstances some could have lasted several days. But when the power went out, we had nothing."