



Joint Centre for Bioethics
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

BIOETHICS SEMINAR

April 27, 2016, 4:10-5:30 pm

155 College St., Room 106 (main floor, to the right of the elevators)

This event will be webcast:

<https://jcb.adobeconnect.com/bioethicsseminars/>

South Asian Religious Fasting and Immobilization at the End-of-life: Jain *sallekhana* and Buddhist *thukdam*

Sean Hillman, PhD (c) Religion/Bioethics/South Asian Studies
Clinical Bioethics Fellow, Centre for Clinical Ethics

Abstract: This talk will address two distinct and exemplary ritual end-of-life practices from the South Asian religious traditions of Jainism and Buddhism. Both ritualized death types have an ancient history and, although rare, are still practiced today with striking shared features such as fasting and immobilization. Although each practice will be explained and contextualized, the focus will be on Jain *sallekhana* because of a recent unresolved Public Interest Litigation against the practice in India. I am not alone in suggesting that some medical decision-making approaches can potentially help legitimate the practice to detractors by protecting potential candidates from coercion. These include pain and capacity assessments, informed consent and refusal, and the Rule of Double-Effect (RDE). I will also offer some possible explanations as to why Voluntary Stopping Eating and Drinking (VSED) among Jains in particular has been legally contested in India whereas VSED among Buddhists has not.

155 College Street, Ste. 754, Toronto, Ontario M5T 1P8 Canada Tel.: [416] 978-2709 Fax: [416] 978-1911 jcb.utoronto.ca

A partnership among the University of Toronto; Centre for Addiction and Mental Health; Holland Bloorview Kids Rehab; The Hospital for Sick Children; Humber River Hospital; Mount Sinai Hospital; Toronto Community Care Access Centre; Trillium Health Partners; and University Health Network (Princess Margaret Hospital, Toronto General Hospital, Toronto Rehabilitation Institute, and Toronto Western Hospital).