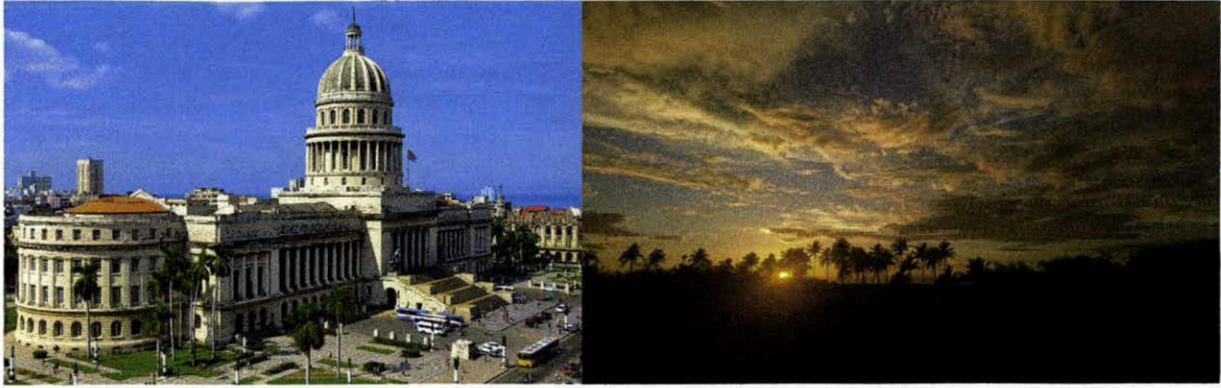# BRAIN DEATH - THE EUROPEAN POSITION

F. Gerstenbrand, H. Baumgartner, H. Binder, Ch.A. Stepan,
Vienna, Innsbruck, Austria

Brain death is the irreversible break down of all brain functions, including brain stem functions with isoelecrtical EEG and facultative proofed circulatory arrest. Clinically special attention should be paid to the possible occurence of spinal reflexes and spinal automatisms. A clear differenciation must be established to locked-in syndrome and to apallic syndrome. This diagnostic basis is accepted in the whole of Europe, in the UK the term „brain stem death" officially is used. The waiting periode, the time between establishing the diagnosis and the withdrawal of supportive measures, extends in Europe from two to six hours, in special cases no waiting period is requested.

The European consensus paper concerning brain death diagnostic directions is influenced by ethnical and religious differences. The Christian Orthodox community, being of great influence in Eastern Europe, demands to follow religious rules in details. In the Islamic idiology decisions taken by physicians are not generally accepted. Buddhism principally does not allow to live with an organ of another human being, or to donate an organ for implantation. Besides the religious differences rules of ethnic groups have to be considered. Another problem for European guidelines is the increasing wave to euthanasia and to the „end of life discussion" in some Western European countries.

In Europe there are different basic rules regarding the organ donor. In Austria there is the principle rule that everybody is a potential donor unless he has a written statement (refusal) with him. The European consensus paper on brain death will be used as a basis for guidelines of the World Federation of Neurology.

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ABSTRACT BOOK

Dr. Calixto Machado, MD, Pd.D
President