Palliative and end-of-life pearls

This book is a collection of 71 case reports dealing with end-of-life situations. It is a series of guides designed for students appearing for board examinations. Heffner is a professor of medicine and Byock a professor of philosophy and practical ethics. The case reports contributed by different authors also have the wisdom of both the editors. A wide spectrum of diseases is covered, from cancer to COPD. The book assumes a basic knowledge of concepts like ‘futile’ care, advanced directives, and power of attorney, to name just a few of the legal and ethical aspects involved in the palliative care of the terminally ill. The lucid discussion is evidence based and, hence, less polemic.

The approach to various problems should be universally true, though the language of communication and the demeanor to be adopted will always be determined by local culture. It is a book on palliative care and hence issues related to active euthanasia have not been included. The pearls in a box at the end of each case report sums up the discussion. It is recommended reading.