### Euthanasia

Euthanasia is the act or practice of ending the life of a person suffering from a terminal illness or an incurable condition. | more...

#### PRO/CON Issues and Essential Questions

**Should euthanasia be a legal option for the terminally ill?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>Euthanasia should be an option so the terminally ill do not have to endure needless pain and suffering.</td>
<td>Euthanasia is morally wrong and violates the basic principle of medicine to save lives.</td>
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<td>Right-to-Dee Movement Sees Gains as World Ages</td>
<td>UK Court Rules Against Euthanasia</td>
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<td>Indian Court Issues Euthanasia Guidelines</td>
<td>Only 20 Percent of Doctors Would Perform Euthanasia if Legal, Poll Finds</td>
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<td>A Myth Is as Good as a Mile</td>
<td>Netherlands’ Euthanasia Stats Are Appalling</td>
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### Research Tools

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### Subjects

- **Euthanasia**

### See also:

- Assisted suicide
- Bioethics
- Euthanasia of animals
- Euthanasia, Law and legislation
- Euthanasia, Religious aspects

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#### Matching Subjects

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- Date

### Netherlands’ Euthanasia Stats Are Appalling

**Province**, McTavish, Anne


**Summary:** "Dutch doctors have gone from fighting death to administering death. We should never have to worry whether a doctor will decide we should be put down rather than healed or cared for." (Province) This point-of-view article argues that the liberal use of euthanasia by Dutch doctors should be cause for alarm, as terminal care and medical treatment is giving way to assisted suicide.

**Subjects:** Assisted suicide, Assisted suicide, Case studies, Assisted suicide, Law and legislation, Assisted suicide, Netherlands, Death, Defined, Euthanasia, Euthanasia, Law and legislation, Euthanasia, Netherlands, Medical ethics, Netherlands, Physicians, Dutch, Attitudes, Medical ethics, Global impact, Medical ethics, Statistics

### 'Pulling the Plug' Isn’t Euthanasia

**Ottawa Citizen (Ottawa, Canada), Somerville, Margaret**


**Summary:** "[I]f the treatment were withdrawn without the necessary consent or against the patient’s wishes -- withdrawal of life-support treatment is not euthanasia. Yet many people, including the artist who penned this illustration and many health-care professionals, mistakenly believe that it is." (Ottawa Citizen) This point-of-view article distinguishes between the ethical medical treatment of terminating life, and euthanasia. Details of how there is a clear difference -- namely regarding the patient’s consent -- is provided.

Summary: "The controversy over euthanasia is one indication of America's fascination with biopolitical issues at the intersection of life and death. Most states prohibit physicians from actively assisting patients to hasten death, but recognize a patient's right to withdraw unwanted life-support machinery ('passive euthanasia'). Currently, Oregon is the only state that deviates from this standard: under its 1995 Death with Dignity Act, physicians may prescribe lethal medication to patients for self-administration ('physician-assisted suicide'), but may not inject the lethal dose themselves ('active euthanasia'). Like the controversy over abortion, the euthanasia debate is conceptualized as a conflict between the sanctity of life and freedom of choice. Proponents of euthanasia fight for the 'right to die' in the name of patient autonomy, while opponents of euthanasia claim that freedom has its limits, and that other values, primarily the 'sanctity of life,' must trump individual rights. This conflict commonly boils down to where precisely one draws the line on the euthanasia spectrum: between active euthanasia, on the one side, and the continuation of medical treatment in all but futile cases, on the other." (Daedalus)

Subjects: Assisted suicide, Euthanasia, Life and death, Power over, Right to die, Terminal care, Terminally ill

Euthanasia Doesn't Cause Disproportionate Number of Deaths: Study; Hindustan Times (New Delhi, India) Sept. 27, 2007 | pg.n.p. | Lexile Score: 1350 | Size: 6K | SIRS Issues

Summary: "A new study conducted by University of Utah in Oregon and the Netherlands found that legalizing physician-assisted suicide or euthanasia does not result in a disproportionate number of deaths among vulnerable people. The 'vulnerable groups' included elderly people, poor, women, minorities, uninsured, minors, chronically ill, less educated or psychiatric patients and AIDS patients. Out of these vulnerable groups, only AIDS patients used doctor-assisted suicide at elevated rates." (Hindustan Times) This article reports on the results of the study, which will be published in the October 2007 issue of the Journal of Medical Ethics. "The research deals with the so-called 'slippery slope' argument that has been made by critics of doctor-assisted suicide" who believe "that by making it legal for medical doctors to help certain patients end their lives, vulnerable people will die in disproportionately large numbers."

Subjects: Assisted suicide, Assisted suicide, Netherlands, Euthanasia, Euthanasia, Netherlands, Oregon, Terminal care, Terminally ill, Oregon Death with Dignity Act, Terminal care, Moral and ethical aspects


Summary: "After 10 years as the only state where physician-assisted suicide is legal, Oregon could be getting some big company."
California's Legislature is advancing a proposal [April 2007] modeled after Oregon's law permitting patients diagnosed with six months or less to live to take lethal pills prescribed by their doctor. The issue has stirred emotion from the Capitol to the pulpits, with supporters casting it as a matter of personal choice and opponents saying it is an immoral compromise of the sanctity of life and a doctors' oath to do no harm." (USA Today) This article reports on both sides in the debate on the issue, emphasizing that "if California legalizes physician-assisted suicide, it will prompt many other states to follow suit and perhaps even prepare the way for a national law."

Subjects: Assisted suicide, Assisted suicide, Law and legislation, California, Euthanasia, Right to die, Terminally ill, Oregon Death with Dignity Act

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Europe Agonizes over Legalization of Euthanasia; USA TODAY, Knox, Noelle


Summary: "This month [Nov. 2005], Lord Joel Joffe introduced an assisted-suicide bill in the British Parliament, setting the stage for a debate--likely in January--echoing those in legislatures across Europe and in America. It is the latest example of how governments are struggling to craft laws that respond to public acceptance of euthanasia and assisted suicide without permitting abuses....While the debate in the USA centers on whether assisted suicide should be legal at all, some European countries already have laws allowing it or are considering them. The Netherlands plans to extend its existing euthanasia law for infants born with severe malformations or terminal and excruciating illnesses. And Dignitas, the Swiss group that helps foreigners who want to end their lives, recently opened an affiliate office in Germany to pressure that country's government to legalize assisted suicide." (USA Today) This article reveals that "discussions about these practices are fueled by the rising number of senior citizens and the declining role of religion in politics and daily life" and acknowledges that "both trends are stronger in Europe than in the USA, which may explain broader public support in Europe for legalizing euthanasia and assisted suicide."


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Study Examines Euthanasia in Netherlands; Buffalo News (Buffalo, NY), Burghart, Tara


Summary: "A study released Monday [Aug. 8, 2005] sheds new light on euthanasia in the Netherlands, the first country to legalize it for terminally ill people, finding that nearly one in eight adult patients who requested mercy killings decided not to go through with it. Nearly half of the euthanasia requests were carried out. The study comes at a time of heightened scrutiny of euthanasia--especially in the Netherlands, where officials acknowledged last year that they had carried out mercy killings of terminally ill newborns." (Buffalo News) This article discusses the results of the study which consisted "of a survey completed by 3,614 Dutch general practitioners who were asked to describe requests for euthanasia they received during the previous year."

Subjects: Assisted suicide, Law and legislation, Assisted suicide, Netherlands, Euthanasia, Euthanasia, Law and
SIRS Subject: Euthanasia

Must We Preserve Life?

America, Hamel, Ronald, and Michael Panicola

April 19-26, 2004 | pg.6-13 | Lexile Score: 1430 | Size: 28K | SIRS Issues Researcher

Summary: "Is the removal of a feeding tube that supplies nutrients and fluids, especially in patients in a persistent vegetative state (PVS), simply a means of killing a vulnerable person--a form of euthanasia? Judging from some of the responses to the much-publicized Terry Schiavo case, it seems there are those who think so, including a fair number of Catholics." (America) This article suggests that "the Terry Schiavo case has generated not only enormous controversy, but also considerable confusion among Catholics and others regarding the moral justification for forgoing artificial nutrition and hydration."

Subjects: Actions and defenses, Euthanasia, Life (Biology), Life support systems (Critical care), Medical ethics, Persistent vegetative state, Tube feeding, Catholic Church, Doctrines, Dehydration (Physiology), Clergy, Attitudes

Unspeakable Conversations

New York Times Magazine, Johnson, Harriet McBryde

Feb. 16, 2003 | pg.50+ | Lexile Score: 920 | Size: 52K | SIRS Issues Researcher

Summary: "He insists he doesn't want to kill me. He simply thinks it would have been better, all things considered, to have given my parents the option of killing the baby I once was, and to let other parents kill similar babies as they come along and thereby avoid the suffering that comes with lives like mine and satisfy the reasonable preferences of parents for a different kind of child. It has nothing to do with me. I should not feel threatened." (New York Times Magazine) The author, Harriet McBryde Johnson, resigned to a wheelchair after suffering through "more than four decades of a muscle-wasting disease," presents her experience of speaking opposite Peter Singer, a Princeton University professor who "believes that it should be lawful under some circumstances to kill, at any age, individuals with cognitive impairments so severe that he doesn't consider them 'persons.'"

Subjects: Bioethics, Ethicists, Euthanasia, People with disabilities, Life (Biology), Persons, Quality of life, Princeton University, Singer, Peter

Who Lives? Who Dies?

Christian Century, Oppenheimer, Mark

July 3-10, 2002 | pg.24-29 | Lexile Score: 1200 | Size: 28K | SIRS Issues Researcher

Summary: "By writing persuasive articles about people's moral obligation to give away money, Singer has caused tens, maybe hundreds of thousands of dollars to be donated to famine relief organizations. Yet Singer also believes that it is OK to kill babies. These may strike you as contradictory beliefs, but they make sense once you understand Singer is a utilitarian. For utilitarians, the moral task is to create utility--to increase the amount of happiness in the world, or at least decrease the pain." (Christian Century) The author discusses the ethical theories of famous and controversial ethics professor Peter Singer.

Subjects: Animal rights, Ethicists, Euthanasia, Quality of life, Religion
SIRS Subject: Euthanasia and ethics, Utilitarianism, Singer, Peter

Choosing to Die; Miami Herald (Miami, FL), Lockwood, Frank E.
June 24, 2001 | pg.1L+ | Lexile Score: 1070 | Size: 15K | SIRS Issues Researcher
Summary: "More than 70 terminally ill patients in Oregon have ended their lives with a doctor's help." (MIAMI HERALD) This article examines Oregon's controversial physician-assisted suicide law and describes opponents' criticism of the practice of euthanasia.
Subjects: Assisted suicide, Law and legislation, Euthanasia, Oregon, Right to die, Oregon Death with Dignity Act

Is Life Sacred? This Ethicist Says No; Dallas Morning News (Dallas, TX), Wolfe, Kathi
May 6, 2000 | pg.1G+ | Lexile Score: 1050 | Size: 9K | SIRS Issues Researcher
Summary: "Ethicists aren't rock stars or politicians. Outside academia, they rarely arouse much passion. This decidedly isn't the case, however, with Peter Singer, the 53-year-old DeCamp Professor of Bioethics at the University Center for Human Values at Princeton University." (DALLAS MORNING NEWS) This article profiles the ethical arguments made by Prof. Peter Singer regarding the value of life as a factor in issues such as euthanasia and animal rights.
Subjects: Ethicists, Euthanasia, Life (Biology), Singer, Peter

Why Gender Matters to the Euthanasia Debate; Hastings Center Report, Parks, Jennifer A.
Jan./Feb. 2000 | pg.30-36 | Lexile Score: 1560 | Size: 36K | SIRS Issues Researcher
Summary: "Are women's requests for aid in dying honored more often than men's, or less? Feminist arguments can support conclusions either that gendered perceptions of women as self-sacrificing predispose physicians to accede to women's requests to die--or that cultural understandings of women as not fully rational agents lead physicians to reject their requests as irrational." (HASTINGS CENTER REPORT) This article discusses feminist approaches to the controversial issue of euthanasia.
Subjects: Euthanasia, Right to die, Sex discrimination in medicine, Women, Medical care

Generating a Storm over Ethics; Baltimore Sun (Baltimore, MD), Hirsch, Arthur
Nov. 20, 1999 | pg.2A | Lexile Score: 1380 | Size: 9K | SIRS Issues Researcher
Summary: Peter Singer, a professor at Princeton University, is a controversial figure due to his outspoken ethical beliefs, such as severely handicapped babies should be allowed to be euthanized. This article provides differing views on Singer's stance on issues like bioethics and infant euthanasia.
Subjects: Bioethics, Ethicists, Euthanasia, Children with disabilities, Infants (Newborn), Death, Singer, Peter

Murder or Mercy?; St. Petersburg Times (St. Petersburg, FL),
Freedberg, Sydney P.
Jan. 31, 1999 | pg.1A+ | Lexile Score: 1150 | Size: 20K | SIRS Issues Researcher

Summary: "Across the country, the criminal justice system can't--or won't--put away mercy killing suspects. Citing lack of evidence, uncooperative family members and juries' reluctance to convict defendants, law enforcement authorities often close the books on such cases without prosecution." (ST. PETERSBURG TIMES) This article examines the issues in light of several mercy-killing cases and includes statistics on states and assisted suicide laws.

Subjects: Assisted suicide, Criminal Justice, Administration of, Euthanasia, Medical examiners (Law), Murder, Police, Prosecution, Right to die

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The Ultimate Civil Liberty; Humanist, Dority, Barbara
July/Aug. 1997 | pg.16-20 | Lexile Score: 1430 | Size: 31K | SIRS Issues Researcher

Summary: In the last few years state legislatures and federal courts have grappled with the legality of physician-assisted suicide. "But with the imminence of a possible resolution to a public controversy that has raged for more than twenty years, a disconcerting but undeniable fact has come to light. It seems that many generally supportive people have begun to express grave reservations and questions and to reveal serious misconceptions about the legalization of physician-assisted suicide." (HUMANIST) The author, a long-time right-to-die activist, explores each misconception and responds to the claims of opponents.

Subjects: Assisted suicide, Euthanasia, People with disabilities, Hospice care, Judgments, Life support systems (Critical care), Medical economics, Right to die, Terminally ill, U.S., Constitution, 14th Amendment, Women, Psychology

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What Right to Die?; New Republic, Rosen, Jeffrey
June 24, 1996 | pg.28+ | Lexile Score: 1470 | Size: 25K | SIRS Issues Researcher

Summary: "The Supreme Court's distinction between refusing treatment and committing assisted suicide, between killing and letting die, is analytically coherent and nationally accepted." (NEW REPUBLIC) Circuit court decisions in New York and California in 1996 have challenged this distinction and asserted a constitutional right to determine the conditions of one's own death. The author argues that these decisions were cases of dangerous judicial activism based on poorly-articulated analogies to public-opinion polls. The issue of assisted-suicide, the author asserts, is best left to "the more rigorous judgments of physicians, philosophers and the people's representatives."

Subjects: Assisted suicide, Euthanasia, Judgments, Judicial process, Law and ethics, Right to die, Right to refuse treatment, Suicide, U.S. Supreme Court, Decisions, Right to die

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Selling Death and Dignity; Hastings Center Report, Hendin, Herbert
May/June 1995 | pg.19-23 | Lexile Score: 1270 | Size: 29K | SIRS Issues Researcher

Summary: "Advocates use case descriptions to show that euthanasia or assisted suicide is sometimes justifiable. Yet even the seemingly clearest cases can prove deeply troubling." (HASTINGS CENTER REPORT) Empowerment and dignity are words frequently used by proponents of euthanasia, but who is really being
empowered, the patients or the relatives and doctors? When a patient requests assisted suicide, is it the result of depression related to his or her illness? Should assisted suicide become a cure for illness and disease? The author raises these questions and others regarding future policy decisions for assisted suicide and euthanasia.

**Subjects**: Assisted suicide, Assisted suicide, Case studies, Empowerment (Term), Euthanasia, Right to die