

Death with Dignity

Physician assisted euthanasia is when a physician assists with the painless deaths of their patients. Currently, Massachusetts has a ban on this type of euthanasia and this ban should be lifted. However, some believed that the ban is just because life is too valuable to be taken away.

Similar to Oregon's act, there are certain individuals who feel that Massachusetts should adopt a death with dignity act. Patients should be able to have the freedom to choose his or her death based on certain circumstances. This would allow the patients to terminate their lives peacefully and eliminate long-term suffering for both the patient and family. In addition, the act would reduce financial expenses associated with medical treatments that are unable to cure the individual.

However, other individuals believe that physician-assisted euthanasia is an immoral act. The reason is that many believe that an individual should never give up in life, despite of all the painful experiences that a patient has suffered. Some also feel that physicians who assist in this procedure are violating their professionalism and committing murder. For these reasons, patients may not trust and depend on their physicians completely.

Overall, no matter what an individual's opinionates on this act, the issue should be decided upon the individual's basis. The most important thing is to provide the necessities of the terminally ill patients and respect to his or her final decisions.

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Physician Assisted Suicide for Financial Purposes

By Jennifer Gasse

Long term and fatal illnesses are not something we plan. They do not just strike the wealthy or those who are not employed. They can strike at any point in one's life. Medical coverage is expensive, and many do not have insurance that will help cover the cost of treatments and prescriptions. Many who are fatally ill do not have the money to live "comfortably" while he or she is ill, and do not want to pass the burden on to their loved ones. For this reason, I believe that Massachusetts should pass a Death with Dignity act.

Many people struggle to pay the co-payments that large insurance companies require, when a person enters a medical office or goes to the pharmacy to pick up a prescription. Many, however, become unemployed when he or she becomes ill and thus losing their medical insurance. These people are then required to pay large amounts of money for medical treatments and prescriptions that are not going to cure their illness. Those who can not afford the "necessary" care are forced to go through a long agonizing death.

However, physician assisted suicide can change all of this. People will be able to "plan" out their deaths. There would be little chance for error, since two physicians must agree on the diagnosis and prognosis. Money spent on these prescriptions and medical expenses can be saved and used however the patient would like. Families may not be left with huge hospital bills. They would also know that their loved one did not endure months of agonizing pain and stress trying to scrape together money to pay for treatment that would not prevent the outcome. Though Potts is against the legalization of physician

assisted suicide he does state “legalizing euthanasia would save substantial financial resources which could be diverted to more “useful” treatments (Potts, 82).”

I do realize that death for financial reasons does seem rather “cold.” I also understand the fear that Potts states” [economic concerns] will inevitably tend to enlarge the category of patients for whom Euthanasia is permitted (Potts, 82).” The one objective remains: It is the patient’s choice, not the attending physician, billing department or large insurance company. Maybe more patients will chose to participate in this procedure due to the financial burden. The patient realizes he or she is going to die and should be able to choose to die without accumulating a debt in the process. Many people feel that a person should live out their life, and let nature take its course. Some may disagree for religious reasons, because any form of suicide is wrong. For those people I would ask the question does god really want one of his children to suffer if it is not necessary. I do not think he would. I believe he would want one of his children to die peacefully, without pain. Some even hold out the hope that a cure will become available in their life window. I would never want to discourage anyone from holding onto hope. At the point, when fatality is inevitable, I believe we should give every person the right to decide how he or she wants to spend their last days: In pain or stressing our over the financial burden or saying goodbye to their loved ones the way he or she would like. The choice would be up to the patient. As Brock states “self determination is valuable because it permits people to form and live in accordance with their own conception of good life, at least within the bounds of justice and consistent with others doing so as well (Brock, 77). People are encouraged to live as he or she wants to live. I believe this should also follow in death: a person should be able to “determine” how he or she would like to die. Their families are going

to lose their loved one either way. The difference is the patient is going to have the freedom to choose how he or she dies. The families would also not have to watch the death occur over several months. They would be able to remember the person, the way he or she was, not in agonizing pain.

I respect those who disagree with my belief, but I believe that every person should be able to make his or her own decision. We jail people for causing others pain. We can not jail a fatal illness, but we can end it quickly if that is what the patient would like. Most of us hope that our loved ones will never get a fatal illness, but if he or she does, we hope it is quick and painless. If we adopt a Death with Dignity act, we can guarantee this for our loved one.

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Should Massachusetts adopt a “Death with Dignity?”

Edited & presented by Zhien Zheng

“Killing an innocent person is intrinsically wrong.” (Introduction of euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide. P. 63). Throughout the Nation, Americans are engaged in an earnest and profound debate about the morality, legality, and practicality of physician-assisted suicide. In my view point, Massachusetts should not adopt a “Death with dignity” that means physician –assisted suicide is legal, because killing an innocent person is intrinsically wrong, it demeans the physician profession, and it leads to unexpected and harmful social consequences.

Physician-assisted suicide is intrinsically wrong. No matter what reasons why physicians assisted patients to kill themselves, physicians committed murder directly or indirectly. Killing is against the sixth commandment” Thou shalt not kill.” Physician-assisted suicide is cruel and inhumane. No one has the right to take other’s life. Physician-assisted suicide makes the wrong decision originally because the physicians should not give up finding the solution for the patients. Can we support this basically wrong decision, physician-assistant suicide, in Massachusetts? We should absolutely not.

Physician-assisted suicide demeans the medical profession. Killing is incompatible with the professional responsibilities of the physician. The profession of the physician must be used “only to cure or comfort, never to kill” (Callahan P. 75). In our society, the role of the physicians, in people’s mind, is to save life, and offer humane and philanthropic love to people who need it. Due to the special responsibility to the society, physicians are respected by people who consider them as their life support, which is evident when the people visit the physician when they feel sick. In contrast, physician-assisted suicide connects directly with the words “murder” because physicians kill human

beings no matter what reasons why they do it. Similarly, crime committed by a murderer is often committed for special reasons. We may forgive the murderer, but we do not respect them because of their conduct. Physician offered assistance to patients and let them killed themselves. In fact, physicians become direct or indirect murderers. Therefore, physicians are less respected than before because they are committed murder, even though they may argue why they need to murder. In sum, physician-assisted suicide really demeans the physician profession and it represents an intrinsic violation of what it means to be a physician.

Physician –assisted suicide leads to unexpected and harmful social consequences. According to Potts, physician-assisted suicide reduces pressure to improve curative or symptomatic treatment and conflict with the aims of medicine (p. 80-81). As a matter of fact, there are a lot of cases, where some physicians misdiagnosed the patient because of their limited knowledge in the cases and they categorized the patients into terminal illness. Physician-assisted suicide allows those mistakes to exist and also limit medical progression because the physicians will not try to improve their knowledge as much as they can. Also, people may not trust their physicians as used to be because the physicians own the right to take their lives. Being a physician, do you want to be distrusted by your patients? I believe that you would not.

Life is precious and priceless. Nothing can be deserved to exchange with one's life. No one has a right to take other's life. The role of a physician is to cure or comfort the patients, and never to kill them. Let the patients trust and respect their physicians forever.

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Philosophy 108

Professor Janet Farrell Smith

Is it Wrong to Choose Your Own Death?

Many individuals, who have never experienced the terminal illness as other individuals, would mostly agree that it is immoral to let an individual die earlier than he or she supposed to. But did it ever cross his or her mind that “what if” there was no cure to illness and he or she would be dying in 6 months. Would he or she rather want to choose the way how they die or live? This is one of the most difficult questions to answer because, whether it is moral or immoral, each every individual is entitled to his or her own opinions. But the most important question being raised in the society and in the medical world is that “Is physician-assisted suicide a moral or immoral thing to perform?” However, in the patients’ view, “Shouldn’t an individual (terminally ill) be able to choose his or her death, so that they could be able to die without pain and with dignity?”

Each patient should be able to die in a way how he or she wants. Although, this would be an immoral act for most individuals who thinks that choosing his or her death would mean giving up. But “what if” there is no cure to this terminal illness, then the patients should have the privilege and choices to live whichever way he or she wants for the last happy days of their lives. The decision of these patients could give him or her no regrets and die peacefully. So, if it’s going to make a patient be satisfied and less painful

for the time he or she have left, wouldn't this then be a good thing? But then again, this is all depended on what an individual thinks and have experienced.

In reality, the patient should have the chance to make the best of what he or she has left in life, even if it's going to make his or her loved ones more painful when they are dead. But it is rather better to leave in the best time, when the patients have fulfilled their necessities and give their families the best memories of being together before the families or loved ones had to go through the mourning of their death. However, on the other hand, using euthanasia could ease the suffering of both sides because the patients could leave without any worries and families could move on without them sooner. So, that the sadness would soon fade away and the families could learn to accept the patients' death. Sometimes, in the patients' perspective, he or she would feel that they would sooner or later have to leave their loved ones. Then, why not die in a painless way that the patients would not have to wonder that he or she could have done something better, while being hospitalize and going through painful treatments?

In addition, some patients would rather choose to die in a way where he or she could die with dignity. This dignity of these patients' could be dying without feeling pain and being a burden for his or her loved ones. The reason is that by having the patients' to be hospitalized could be huge financial and stressful problems for their families and loved ones. Most patients' would not want have to see his or her loved ones to go through so much problems (financially) because they feel they are the ones who have caused these problems. In addition, having their families and loved ones seeing what they go through before dying is also a burden for them. Such as seeing the patients goes through massive pain in treatments or having symptoms from the terminal illness are too much for

the patients, families, and loved ones to handle. Therefore, “there is no morally significant distinction between killing and allowing to die” (Mappes & Ze mbaty, 63), because patients should be able to do what he or she wants, even if physician-assisted suicide is something that patients prefer to use to die with dignity and in painless ways.

Sometimes, using the procedure physician-assisted suicide is the way where the patients could have the access to painless death. There are some patients who don't want to go through pain before death. Having the patients' families and loved ones see them suffer is not one of the last things they want to ever put the most important people in their lives go through. So, these patients would rather leave their presence in their loved ones' memories as a whole and how they once looked healthy, especially happy. So, if this procedure is the best way for the patients to die as a whole spiritually, mentally, and physically; then should this procedure be taken as an immoral act that most individuals would opinionate as?

However, the moral aspect does have its good reasons to why physician-assisted suicide is an immoral act. The reasons are that the patient's should have never given up easily and throw away his or her life like that. Regardless, even when there are some doctors who have said to their patients that there's only a certain amount of time to live. In some religious eyes, hope and faith in god should always be within every individual because everything does happen for a reason. Whether if it's for better or for worse, the patients should always look on the brighter side and taken what's best from this experience because he or she would never going to know what's going to happen next. Sometimes, for the time period when some patients have been given left, there are some who have been very strong to survive and surpassed their terminal illness. Inside of these

patients, some were strong-willed to have cherished every minute of their life and to never give up. Therefore, no matter how hard or painful it is for the patients, there should always be hope for the better.

In similarly, there is another view to look at when the patients are using physician-assisted suicide. Most of the time, using euthanasia could affect the doctor's professionalism. According to this society, there are some doctors who cares deeply for their patients and would favor the patients in using the euthanasia, if it's going to bring painless deaths. For this reason, doctors have been sentenced to jail because this procedure is illegal in most state and are seen as killing their patients, instead of healing or curing them. So, if the patients have not given up in life, then these doctors would never have to go to jail and have their licensed be taken away because of their participation. Therefore, by "fixing the cause of death may be very important from a legal point of view, for it may determine whether criminal charges are brought against the doctor" (Mappes & Zembaty, 72).

In the doctors' perspective, using euthanasia is also a burden for them because who would like to see their patients die with all the efforts to try cure for those they care. To perform euthanasia is not easy for these physicians because " a request for physician-assisted suicide by a competent, dying patient who is suffering intolerably places the physician in a moral conflict between the duty to relieve suffering and the duty not to kill or to help kill"(Miller and Meier, 101). In any way, most of these physicians would be blame for killing and being hated by the society who doesn't understand the main reason behind this whole painful experience. So, the question being asked for these individuals are, "is it right for these physicians (at certain circumstances) to be blamed fully on what

they have done? But of course, the only real true answer to this question is left upon what individuals define the act of morality and immorality.

The physician-assisted suicide should never have to be depended on how an individual wants to view this action as either moral or immoral. The fact is that the patients should really be the individuals to have the freedom to decide on whether or not using physician-assisted suicide is right for them, under certain circumstances. In despite of what most individuals would think that these patients are not mentally competent to decide what's best for them because of their terminal illnesses; these patients should still be held to respect and able to make their own decisions, no matter what, because they are the real individuals who's actually living this life that no individual would ever fully understands. For that reason, the best thing for those who are standing outside of these patients' actions should try to be understandable. In addition, these individuals should always remind themselves that no matter what happens, "We believe we can best serve our patients, and preserve their trust, by respecting their desire for autonomy, dignity, and quality, not only of life, but of dying" (Watts & Howell, 85). The reason is that this should have been the ways to live in life and respect others.

For the many reasons in this society, most individuals have been too focused on what he or she thinks about a certain situation and not try to relate to what these patients feel. These patients have gone through so many ups and downs in their lives that the individuals are unable to take the time to look at the big picture and finding the real reason why this whole problem have started. As an advice, the individuals should put themselves in these patients' positions, because so much pain has come out of these patients' experiences. Individuals should be trying to make things easier for the patients

and respect their decisions, instead of making things harder for them. No individuals would be able understand others unless he or she tries to relate or has experienced what these patients' have been through. So, the act of physician-assisted suicide should not be decided upon what individuals think but towards the patients, their families, and loved ones. If physician-assisted suicide would relieve pain and suffering for the patients, then so be it, because this would only give the patients to die peacefully without any burdens.

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Physician assisted euthanasia, is a process when someone is killed by a physician without any pain involved whether it is voluntary or involuntary. Involuntary euthanasia and voluntary active euthanasia is mostly illegal now, but one state actually made it legal for voluntary euthanasia to be practiced, which is Oregon. However involuntary euthanasia, if doctors were given the right to use this technique, is unconstitutional so it should never be practiced, but as for voluntary active euthanasia, it should become legal in order to give people the right to choose whether or not they want to die due to some incurable painful ailment. Many people are against euthanasia because they believe that it is unethical to kill someone. However, this should not be because euthanasia when applied correctly will relieve a patient and the patient's close ones more prolonged suffering. The people that are against voluntary physician assisted euthanasia do not take into account that "it is cruel and inhumane to refuse the plea of a terminal ill person for his life to be mercifully ended" (Mappes and Zembaty 63). This report will support voluntary euthanasia and any lift on the ban on it within the United States.

Voluntary active euthanasia should be legal because many people are suffering for no reason even though they know the outcome that their life is about to be shortened due some painful illness. If a person has a sickness like an inoperable painful malignant tumor within that individual's body then why does that individual not have the right to choose to end his/her own misery? This is because there are individual laws within a majority of states that will prevent this person from having euthanasia. Instead of letting the person die peacefully under his own accord, the law wants that person to deal with this unbearable pain and wait for the day he dies, while his loved one watch him suffer

too. The person's loved ones cannot do anything to stop the pain, but is forced to watch as the tumor consumes the individual until the day that death occurs. This sick person might also cause the loved ones to pay for expensive medical bills too, since that person might need the care of the hospital and medicine to live, which will cause financial difficulties and combine it with their worries about that person's well-being. However, in order to end most of the suffering soon, the government should make active euthanasia legal. When euthanasia is enacted that person would be able to end his life with a physician assisting it and the person will die without any further suffering or worry his family further.

When active euthanasia is legal it should not be used by everyone without first getting the consent of their family, physicians. They should also have a terminal disease that is causing unbearable pain or suffering. In this case, no one has to worry whether or not the patient is going to be euthanized, since they all have consented to the process. This process of checks may help decide whether the person is competent enough to decide his or own death. If one of the groups that are needed to consent denies the process then this process will not happen. For example, if the family is worried about the patient, but does not want him/her to die yet, they should deny his/her proposal to be euthanized in order to stop the process, even though he has the consent of the doctors. Even with this system of selective euthanasia some highly ethical people might still decide that this process is still unethical.

Many people who are opposed to this do not care whether or not the patient is suffering or not, but instead look at their own ethical beliefs to label euthanasia as immoral. Many of them might say that any type of "killing an innocent person is

intrinsically wrong” (Mappes and Zembaty 63) or they might also say, “killing is incompatible with the professional responsibilities of the physician” (Mappes and Zembaty 63). All of those are just opinions, but should not be taken as law. What should be taken into account is the patients and their families think about, not the people who are intolerant to changes in their moral values.

The people, who think killing other people with painful terminal illnesses whom wants to be euthanized is wrong, should be thinking whether the person with the actual illness is suffering. The dissenters should also take into account that by opposing euthanasia of terminal ill patients that they will actually be promoting the sickness to continually plague the victim and the victim’s family with worries and financial problems until the time the victim eventually dies. Lastly, the people who oppose euthanasia because they think it is unpractical for a physician to be killing his patients should take into account that it is the physician’s duty to serve the patients with the best care. The best care for a terminally ill person should be what they want, since they are going to die anyways. It would not be incompatible with the physician’s professional responsibilities because it is his job to relieve the patients from their misery, all that the physician is doing during the euthanasia of terminal ill patients is speeding up the patient’s inevitable death and making it pain free.

In conclusion, physician euthanasia for terminal ill patients should not be illegal and all bans on it should be lifted. This process should in no way be unethical, since the patients are going to die soon. Euthanasia can do so much for the terminally ill patient and his/her family because it can relieve them from prolonged grief, the financial vacuum, and the waste of time that the disease will cause to a terminally ill patient.

