

8 dangers of legal Euthanasia

1 Legal safeguards cannot protect the vulnerable from euthanasia abuses

Euthanasia laws elsewhere are regularly circumvented by some health professionals. Legislation can never protect vulnerable people, the frail, the elderly and the disabled from pressure to terminate their 'burdensome' lives, or worse, from being killed without consent. A 2010 study revealed 32% of euthanasia killings in Flanders, Belgium had no specific request.

2 Euthanasia and assisted suicide are the ultimate tools for elder abuse

The extent of killing of elderly / disabled people pressured into requesting euthanasia or assisted suicide is easily hidden from public view owing to failure to officially report cases.

3 It sends a hypocritical message about suicide

Society is rightly concerned to prevent suicide. Yet advocates of legalising euthanasia and PAS are campaigning for a change in the law to provide a perfectly legal way for a person who is feeling depressed or lonely to be *assisted* in killing themselves.

4 The killing escalates over time

From being a treatment of last resort for a tiny minority with poorly managed symptoms it becomes the therapy of choice for depression, fear of the future, loneliness and even new-borns with birth defects.

5 Mistaken diagnosis of terminal illness is not uncommon

Most people assume that doctors can accurately diagnose terminal illness and predict the time to death. Not so. Incorrect diagnosis and / or prognosis will inevitably lead to the killing of people who are mistakenly told they have only a short time to live.

6 A dignified death is not guaranteed

Research in Holland shows that approx. 10% of killing by euthanasia and 30% of assisted suicides are complicated by unforeseen problems. Some patients experience multiple.

7 It compromises the hospice movement

There may be less drive to improve terminal and palliative care facilities and training if euthanasia is seen as a more "cost-effective" option.

8 Trust in doctors & nurses falls

People may well wonder how their doctor's covert opinion that they would be better off dead is influencing their dedication for treating the ailments that affect most people in older age.



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www.euthanasia-free.org.nz



Frequently Asked Questions

about Euthanasia and P.A.S.

What is 'euthanasia'?

The word comes from Greek meaning 'a good death.' In recent times it has come to mean the deliberate killing of people – most commonly the seriously ill or disabled – who are judged, either by themselves or others, to have such a poor quality of life, that they would be better off dead.

What is physician-assisted suicide (PAS)?

This is where a medical doctor prescribes lethal drugs for a patient desirous of committing suicide. The patient is expected to self-administer the drugs. In practice, sometimes relatives or members of voluntary euthanasia societies may be in attendance to assist.

Isn't euthanasia already occurring in New Zealand hospitals?

Many people are confused as to what euthanasia is and is not. Patients who die whilst taking large doses of drugs prescribed for the relief of symptoms have not been euthanased. It is ethically and legally acceptable to use high doses of drugs with the intent to relieve symptoms. It is not ethical or legal to administer medication with the intention of killing the patient. The doctor's intention is key.

Should not a person have the right to request euthanasia if their life is unbearable?

Everyone has the right to request euthanasia. But society has the right to deny the request because experience elsewhere shows that it will result in euthanasia on demand through:

- The criteria for it becoming increasingly wide so as to include social deprivations such as loneliness,
- Some doctors developing a tolerance for euthanasing people who have not requested it,
- Frail, elderly people feeling pressure to request it so as not to be a 'burden'.

In addition it compromises efforts to reduce the high suicide rates in our community. All these trends are noted in countries where euthanasia is legal.

Surely people should be able to control when and how they should die? It's a private matter after all.

It is a self-evident myth that people are able to have control of their lives and destinies. Changing fortune has a habit of arriving 'out of the blue.' Personal autonomy is not an absolute right: for the sake of harmony in society everyone has to modify their behaviour and personal desires. What might be thought desirable for a tiny minority of people has the potential to put the lives of hundreds of thousands of others at risk.

Pro-euthanasia advocates recommend euthanasia as the way to ensure one dies with dignity. What's wrong with that?

Overseas experience shows that up to one in three recipients of euthanasia suffers some unintended side-effect such as fits, vomiting or waking up again out of a drug-induced coma. Euthanasia does not guarantee a hassle-free / dignified death.