

NAME WITHELD

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English 1023

4/21/10

### EUTHANASIA: The Right to Choose

Many people believe that “euthanasia” and “assisted suicide” are the same thing.

Assisted suicide literally means an individual intentionally provides a patient with guidance and information about taking their own life, usually by lethal injection or overdose medication.

Euthanasia is the intentional killing by act or omission of a dependent human being for his or her alleged benefit (<http://euthanasia.com/definitions.html>). Euthanasia is split into two categories,

Passive or Involuntary Euthanasia. In Passive Euthanasia, the person gives consent to be killed.

If the patient chooses to end their life, it is their decision. Nobody should be forced to do something they do not want to do. Involuntary Euthanasia means the opposite, they did not give

consent to be killed. **Involuntary Euthanasia is an important issue that needs to cease. It is not**

**right to end someone's life, whether they are disabled mentally disabled, or injured. More**

**regulations should be enforced to prevent involuntary euthanasia.**

The Netherlands and Belgium have already legalized Euthanasia. Dutch Physicians in the Netherlands are known for assigning the deaths to many cancer patients. “Life-terminating Treatment” is what they call the killing of a patient without their knowledge or **consent. (Russell)**

There are many stories from both sides of people who oppose euthanasia and people who favor euthanasia. It truly depends on the patient, but sometimes people need their family to speak for them. Terri Schiavo is one of the most famous involuntary euthanasia cases known. She was

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**Comment [1]:** Dear (),

You have an interesting paper here. I see a lot of little errors in your formatting that you need to really take care to address in the future (note by citations below).

A big thing I would have liked to have seen is a clearer distinction or further elaboration on voluntary and involuntary euthanasia earlier in the paper.

You did well with your rebuttal and it made up for parts in the middle of the paper where you seemed overtly focused on other issues.

Keep working on this.

Mr. Evans

Grade: 85/100 pts.

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**Comment [2]:** I really would have liked this to have been put into a direct and concise phrase to clearly argue, its okay.

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**Comment [3]:** Period after the citation. Check this.

disabled due to a brain injury. Her husband, Michael Shiavo was in a new relationship and had two kids with his new girlfriend. While Terri's family was willing to take care of her and claimed that she was recovering, Michael decided not to put her rehabilitation and therapy. He also wants the doctors to take her off the feeding tube. Michael lost hope in her recovery and claimed that she would not want to live like this. (Smith) Her family was against this and Terri's case went all the way to the Supreme Court. Terri and her family are catholic and euthanasia would be against her religion. Unfortunately, Terri died from starvation and dehydration. (www.terrisfight.org)

Euthanasia has been wide spread all the over world for generations. Around 400 BC, Hippocrates wrote the Hippocratic Oath opposing euthanasia. Ancient Greeks and Romans believed that if a person does not want to live, why preserve their life. Thus, Voluntary euthanasia was allowed during their time of civilization. During the middle ages, Christianity was important. Everybody believed that life was a precious gift from God. Euthanasia was definitely opposed during this time. This opposition to euthanasia prevailed all the way through the Renaissance and Reformation. In the earliest days of the United States, Evangelical Christians and most Americans rejected suicide and euthanasia. Euthanasia and suicide were considered a criminal act. The Anti Euthanasia Act was passed in New York, in 1828. Euthanasia was a major debate like abortion. During the late 1800's, Samuel Williams received serious attention when he proposed to use morphine and other drugs to treat pain and also end people's lives(Euthanasia Pros and Cons). Most physicians and the American Medical Association opposed Samuel William's proposal and believed that drugs should only be administered to treat pain. Euthanasia started getting more attention from the public when Ohio legalized euthanasia in the early 1900's. Public attention for euthanasia soared when Dr.

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Comment [4]: lives (Euthanasia)

Haiselden decides to talk the parents of a deformed baby into not giving it life saving surgery, but rather just letting it die. During this time, Americans agreed that killing deformed babies would make the society a better place.(Emanuel)

Many important figures of society during that time got involved including Helen Keller. She believed that the physicians had the right to decide whether life was worth living. By the 1930's, where economic times were hard, most Americans agreed with Dr. Haislden that killing mentally disabled or deformed babies was best for the society. They believed "Deformed babies" would not likely be able to function successfully in society. The Voluntary Euthanasia Act was introduced in the U.S. Senate, which demonstrates how important euthanasia is by becoming a legal issue.(Otlowski)

The most famous use of Involuntary Euthanasia of all time is the Nazis mass murders in Europe. They changed the perception of euthanasia in the U.S. The Nazis killed mental, handicapped, and disabled people. They also killed millions of Jewish people. (Euthanasia Pros and Cons) World Medical Association condemned euthanasia, therefore supporting euthanasia started to decline in the mid 1950's and 1960's. The Euthanasia Society of America petitioned to declare the right to die as a human right, for people suffering from a incurable disease. The United Nations reject this petition. This was the era where African Americans were trying to gain independence, the Vietnam War, and even people who choose Euthanasia. It is important for citizens to make their own decisions instead of the government. If someone chooses euthanasia because they do not want to suffer, then their decision should accepted. Around the 1970's was when the idea of people having the right to make their own life decisions became accepted instead of having physicians make the decisions (Arguments against Euthanasia). The Patient's

Bill of Rights was passed for the patient's right to refuse treatment. Pope John Paul II also issued the Declaration of Euthanasia, where euthanasia is opposed, but increased use of medication was permitted. If patients want to refuse medication, it is the right thing to accept their decision. The first law in America permitting euthanasia was by the state of Oregon called the Oregon Death with Dignity Act. President Bill Clinton also signs the Assisted Suicide Funding Restriction Act of 1997, it prohibits the use of federal funds to cause a patient's death. In the same year, The U.S Supreme court rules there was no right to die. Dr. Jack Kevorkian showed a videotape of him assisting the suicide of Thomas Youk on National Television. He was later arrested and put in prison for 10 to 25 years for murder of Thomas Youk. California, New Mexico, Arkansas, Nevada, Idaho, Oregon, North Carolina and Texas are the eight states that signed the right to die bills into law. Euthanasia is still a controversy issue today. (Horan)

People over the decades defend euthanasia depending on what side it is more popular on. (Otlowski) For example, The only reason why people started opposing it again is because the Americans did not want to be like the Germans. They found a reason to oppose it. Then they started favoring it again when Dr. Jack Kevorkian demonstrated the operation on National Television. Now euthanasia has two distinct sides, those who oppose it and those who favor it. The most important thing is that everyone should know how euthanasia started and how it came out to be, even in the wrong hands. It truly depends on how an individual views life or the value of other people's lives, Not the physician or the government.

One of the most known reasons to favor euthanasia is that people think it is a benefit that it ends unbearable pain. There are major cases where a patient has a incurable disease or is suffering in great pain. Euthanasia is used to speed up death. ([www.euthanasia.com](http://www.euthanasia.com))This issue

splits our economy in half. It makes people rethink about their opinions towards euthanasia because sometimes it is a good benefit to end someone's life who are enduring pain. Saving someone from unbearable pain is also called by the people who favor euthanasia, "dying with dignity or the "right to die." People who favor euthanasia are pushing legislation for more laws that will offer the option to die. The Right to die means a person should be allowed to commit suicide due a serious condition or terminal illness. (Otlowski)

Dying has become more complicated over the years. People used to die from illnesses because medication did very little. Keeping someone past their lifespan using a life support machine is said to be wrong by some people. Technology has advanced to the point where there are life sustaining machines and life sustaining treatments.(Russell) Legalizing euthanasia would also benefit everyone by providing reassurance to patients that are dying or that are in pain. If this option is available, forty one percent of cancer patients that are not terminally ill have stated that, "the discussions about end of life care with their physician would increase their trust in their physician"([JStor Euthanasia](#)).

Another reason to favor euthanasia is that some people believe it is necessary when somebody is in depression or it helps relieve the person who feels like their quality of life is low ([www.euthanasia.com](http://www.euthanasia.com)). Physicians and other psychiatrists oppose this because this is a mental situation that can be treated, or can be dealt with. People who show signs of depression or are suicidal can get anti-depressant pills and overdose on them, that is an example of passive euthanasia. 800,000 Americans attempt to commit suicide while 30,000 people die each year because of it. Passive euthanasia would be viewed as a good benefit for people who think life is not worth living. There was a case that involved a young girl named Jennifer Garvey, who was

only 15 and she had shot herself in the head because she could not break up with her boyfriend. Her boyfriend even provided her with the gun, and he ended up getting charged with assisted suicide. Jennifer was already depressed. The story was the boy had complete control of Jennifer in the relationship([www.euthanasia.com](http://www.euthanasia.com)). There are two issues that deal with this case because it was either passive euthanasia because she wanted to be free or involuntary euthanasia, because what if the boy told her too. If Euthanasia was legalized, suicide rates would increase. More treatments should be provided to help depression. It is their decision for suicide, but as a country, there should be preventions for suicide because it can be treated. (Horan)

Disabled and elderly patients are probably the most important people of the issue with euthanasia. There are many articles that repeatedly discuss the issue of terminating a disabled person's life([www.euthanasia.com](http://www.euthanasia.com)). People who oppose euthanasia usually bring up the issue of physicians treating deformed or disabled people like their life is not worth living. If it is their decision to not live, they should not be forced to live. Wayne Cockfield was a Vietnam War veteran. His legs were blown off from stepping on a land mine and he had other serious injuries like the use of his right hand. He lost his legs through infection and everyone thought he would be "better off." Many years later, Cockfield discusses the healthcare that the disabled received in the United States. He states that, "People with disabilities are often considered by other people to have a poor quality of life. This trend would drop the bottom out for people with disabilities if physician-assisted suicide were legalized" (<http://www.euthanasia.com/case2.html>).

In the past, deformed babies would be killed because everyone thought it would make America a better place. Elderly patients are turning to euthanasia because the cost of healthcare or the cost of nursing homes. They feel like there is no other choice, like Mrs. Santiago. She is an

80 year old woman who had recently lost her husband. Her 50 year old son had children in college. She suffered from a heart attack that paralyzed the left side of her body. Her son tried to take care of her as best as he could, but they were not financially stable. Mrs. Santiago looked at euthanasia as the only choice. (<http://www.cjd.org/paper/santiago.html>) The doctor could have discussed with her other options for recovery or even teach her how to live independently with her son. Elderly people are nearing the end of their life, so they look to euthanasia as the only option. Euthanasia is accepted when it is the patient's decision to have end their life or refuse treatment.

Another reason people are opposing euthanasia is because they believe voluntary euthanasia will eventually turn into involuntary euthanasia ([www.euthanasia.com](http://www.euthanasia.com)). If voluntary euthanasia is going to be viewed as a good decision, patients are going to feel guilty that they did not choose euthanasia. They will feel guilty for wasting money, being a burden, or rethink their financial stability. Euthanasia is not forced on anybody. The issue is that if this becomes legal, laws will most likely expand euthanasia and it will increase abuse of it. A controversial problem that deals with euthanasia is called "The Slippery Slope." This is an effect that has occurred where euthanasia has been first been legalized for only the terminally ill. Laws were changed later to allow it for other people. (<http://www.euthanasia.com/proscons.html>). In the past, The United States used to view African Americans as not humans, but just as slaves or a piece of property. The Germans believed that the Aryan race was superior, therefore they treated Jewish and other non-Aryan people like animals ([Euthanasia Pros and Cons](http://www.euthanasia.com/proscons.html)). There is still slavery, genocide, and euthanasia still going on many countries, like Africa. The society is already accepting the right to kill babies in a womb if they are a inconvenience, or imperfect. The elderly

are also being seen as incapable mentally and physically. They are also considered now a inconvenience, or they are also unwanted. (Russell)

Religion beliefs can be a main basis for an individual's perspective of euthanasia. Most Christians are against euthanasia. They believe that life is valuable gift from God and it is important to not interrupt the natural process of death. It is also believed that humans are valuable since they are like God's image. The value of every human being's life is all the same. Wanting euthanasia would demonstrate that life that God provided the individual is worthless. Nobody should feel like they are or someone else is worthless. Birth and Death are important events in most religions. Death is the most controversial because euthanasia deals with life sustaining machine or a liquid ending your life when Christians think it should be God who decides. (Horan) Most Christians strongly believe that it is wrong to interrupt the process of the path to heaven. Respect is an important factor in religion, but it is also important to respect one's decision if they want to end their life. The church also agrees that a patient can refuse to not get treatment. This is not euthanasia, but it just shows that the patient accepts the condition they are in even if it can leads to death. Different religions have different beliefs. The Catholics believe that euthanasia is just wrong because of the commandment "Thou shall not kill." They also do not believe in "the right to die." Euthanasia and suicide are both a rejection to God's sovereignty over life and death. People who believe in the "right to die" are denying the truth about their relationship with God. The church believes that an individual should enter the dying process with their trust in god and with all the mysteries. (Emanuel)They should die with dignity of letting themselves be loved unconditionally. Another belief is that other religions believe that

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Comment [5]: Good rebuttal

euthanasia is a good decision, if you do not want to live your life. God does not want you to suffer in a miserable life.

Over the Years, Euthanasia has become a more important issue. People are always trying to either legalize it or make it illegal. People who oppose euthanasia believe that it will be hard to have guidelines and laws for euthanasia. Abuse of euthanasia will increase if no more states will have more regulations. People who are in favor of euthanasia think regulating is a good idea except that it will still not stop people to use euthanasia for bad motives. There still might be a possibility that patients will still be pressured into choosing death when they still want to live for just a little bit longer. Patients might be more protected due to legalizing euthanasia because there would already be set procedures that will guide them through the process. A patient who was scared and decides to choose euthanasia would actually not be as scared when they are given help and support through the regulated procedure. A common ground that will help euthanasia is that it is better to have regulation on euthanasia than nothing at all. (Russell)

All states should have regulation and have euthanasia to a limited extent. To minimize abuse, it should be legalized and be regulated. A structure for regulating euthanasia is most likely time consuming in case there is a reconsideration. The patient's medical condition should be looked over first. Their medical condition's course should be looked over thoroughly. Doctors should check over the patient's psychological stability. Depending on the mentality of the patient, depression is an issue that a psychiatrist or a counselor could help treat. By accepting the request of euthanasia, the patient should request it more than once to make sure that is what they want for sure. The family is also another important factor in deciding this decision. The patient should be in good care before thinking about euthanasia ([Arguments Against Euthanasia](#)). In the state of

Oregon, where euthanasia is already legalized, about 30 percent of the patients died before it was completed. It is important that the procedure will have a set time period. About 45 percent of patients changed their mind due to good care in the hospitals. It is hard to find physicians that will go with the request in Oregon. In the Netherlands, doctors are exempted from criminal liability due to certain circumstances. They have guidelines where the patient should be the one requesting voluntary euthanasia, they must be in unbearable pain or have a incurable illness, and have tried to find other solutions with the patient. Children of 16 to 17 are allowed to make the decision to end their life. Their parents must be involved and approve the decision. If a patient cannot tell the request and write it, it will actually be looked over. Euthanasia does not have to be solved, but it can be regulated to minimize abuse.

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**Comment [6]:** Works cited begins on new page and separated for works consulted. Need to have proper MLA format.

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