




Do we have the Right to Die?

By
Mason Kramer
and
Samantha Prince

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Abstract

- What is euthanasia?
- Is euthanasia moral?
- History of euthanasia
- The argument against euthanasia
- Ethical theories regarding euthanasia
- Where is euthanasia legal?
- Personal views on euthanasia
- Why we chose euthanasia





Introduction

What is euthanasia.....

Euthanasia can be defined as mercy killing. It is a painless way to offer death to patients suffering from an incurable, extremely painful disease, or coma that has been deemed irreversible.

Euthanasia can be a means to relieve suffering by deliberately ending a person's life.

Continued...

- Different forms of euthanasia include
 - Passive euthanasia which involves withholding or limiting treatment that is sustaining a patient's life. Or prescribing patients with high doses of painkillers, which can become toxic and assist in the passing of the patient.
 - Active euthanasia is when the physician administers something to help end the patient's life, per their request.
 - Ex: Intentionally giving someone a lethal dose of medication
 - Voluntary euthanasia is when a patient themselves requests to end their life.
 - Nonvoluntary involves somebody else making the decision for the patient.
 - Ex: family member must decide whether to stop life support for an incapacitated patient.



Key terms

- Physician-assisted suicide – where the physician provides the patient with the means to end their life.
- Palliative care – care for patients with terminal illnesses, focuses on comfort for the patient and pain management
- Assisted suicide –when a patient wishes to die, and someone helps

The history of euthanasia

Euthanasia has its beginnings in human history in the 5th century B.C. to modern day.

5th century B.C - 1st century B.C: In ancient Greece and Rome (before practice of Christianity) infanticide, active euthanasia, and physician suicide were tolerant with cognitive beliefs of inherent value in human life lacked. Physicians commonly assisted in patient suicides even in presence of the Hippocratic Oath.

12th-15th century: Christian views through the Hippocratic Oath oppose euthanasia

13th century: Christian and Jews commonly oppose euthanasia

17th century: American colonies prohibit suicide and assisted suicide

17th-18th century: Renaissance and Reformers challenge church opposition of euthanasia

Late 18th century: Enlightenment acceptance of suicide and euthanasia ends with firm rejection in Americas

1828: US state of New York becomes first to outlaw assisted suicide

1930s: Public support for euthanasia increases during US Great depression

1938: Euthanasia Society of America (ESA) is founded

1940: US acceptance of euthanasia challenged in sight of Nazi atrocities of killing and experimenting on the mentally ill and handicap.

1950- World Medical Association condemns use of euthanasia

1977: Eight states (California, New Mexico, Arkansas, Nevada, Idaho, Oregon, North Carolina, and Texas) sign right to die bills into laws allowing for physician prescription of medicine to hasten death



Is euthanasia moral?

Most people would consider a concept that allows a person to end their suffering as a moral act. It feels ethical to grant a person relief from pain when other options are not available.

Yet, some people consider euthanasia suicide or murder, both of which are unethical.

So, is euthanasia considered to be morally permissible?

The argument...

Most people who oppose euthanasia and find it to be unethical argue these main reasons...

1. Physician judgment
2. Morality and religion
3. It's a slippery slope
4. Ethics

Physician Judgement



Those against euthanasia say...

how can we determine if a physician is making the best choice, determining a person's autonomy or mental capacity is not a foolproof system and different doctors may determine different prognoses.

Are all doctors fit to make these decisions?


How can we be sure they are giving us informed consent and accurate information?

Solutions

Doctors are licensed professionals that undergo years of training and education before they can make any decisions regarding a person's life.

A second opinion should always be considered.

Knowing the diagnosis and prognosis is the first step in being able to make an informed decision. They have case nurses that can explain to patients and families in understandable terms what the possible outcomes are.



Doing your own research and asking questions can help prepare to make these types of decisions.

Morality and religion

Many people say that allowing a person to decide whether they die, weakens the sanctity of life itself.

Religion argues that life was given to us by a God, and it is not our place to take it. And god is the only one who can decide the outcome of our life.

People with a consequentialist view believe euthanasia to be murder or suicide, no matter the circumstances because the outcome is death.

Our lives are to be considered sacred; we should fight at all costs to keep them.

Slippery slope & Ethics

Legalizing euthanasia can lead to the abuse of patients, physicians, families, and anyone else involved in having to make these decisions.

Legal euthanasia can lead to the acceptance of other medical practices that would otherwise have been deemed unethical.

If euthanasia were to become legal globally, demands for similar acts to be legal would begin.

When you legalize euthanasia, the line between active and passive, voluntary or involuntary, euthanasia can begin to fade, and unethical decisions can be made.

If euthanasia is legal, then slightly different variations of it, assisted suicide, active or aggressive euthanasia, or even suicide itself, will become morally acceptable.

- It can be viewed as unnecessary when the available medication to make a patient comfortable, even with terminal illnesses, is available.
- A doctor's duty is to do no harm to patients and treat their conditions the best they can.
- As a physician killing or hurting a patient is unethical maleficence. And they could face severe consequences regardless of circumstance.
- Euthanasia sells the hope of death, not life
- Euthanasia becomes a scapegoat for malpractice care, mis treatment, or even murder.



Ethical theories

Deontology/Kant theory

- Based on Kantian views euthanasia can be defined as unethical. Kantian theory suggests that an outcome is good or bad based on whether the action itself was right or wrong. In euthanasia the outcome is death, and the action is taking a life, no matter the circumstances, this act is wrong and unmoral.

Utilitarianism

- Based on utilitarianism euthanasia is both morally and ethically right. Utilitarianism has been defined as the most reasonable form of ethics, it determines the good and bad based on the outcome and the moral intentions of the act itself.. In the case of euthanasia, ending a life, to help end a patient's suffering would be considered morally good. Death would end their pain, therefore, creating the most happiness, making it ethical.

Where is Euthanasia legal?

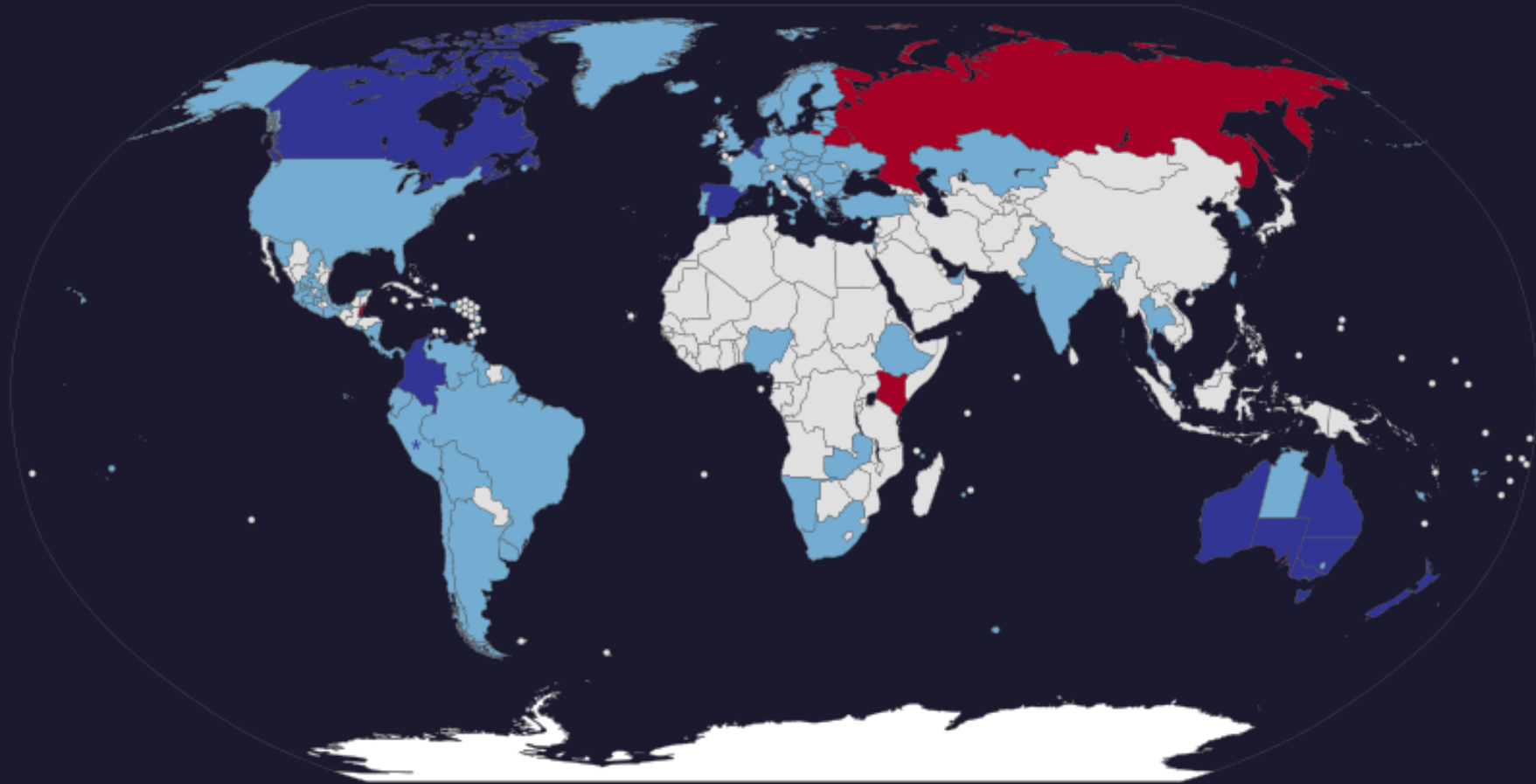
Current status of euthanasia around the world:

Dark blue – Active voluntary euthanasia legal

Light blue – Passive euthanasia
legal (refusal of treatment or
withdrawal of life support)

White – Active euthanasia illegal, passive euthanasia is not legislated or regulated

Red – All forms of euthanasia
illegal



My opinion...

I believe euthanasia is ethical, as it allows suffering patients a way to end all the pain on their own terms.

There are some obvious regulations and guidelines that must be followed in order to ensure euthanasia does not become a means to cover devious intent.

My grandfather passed recently, and he was offered the “end-of-life cocktail” to ease his suffering. I am truly glad he received it, he was not himself in his final days, constantly in pain, thinned to nothing but bone, having trouble breathing, unresponsive at times, and withering away before my eyes. My children hardly recognized him in this state.

I don't think giving him the means to end that pain could ever be considered unethical.

Under the proper circumstances, euthanasia is a blessing.

Circumstances...

- If a patient is incapacitated but has documentation stating they do not wish to be kept on life support or end-of-life care, then the family and the physician have an obligation to fulfill these wishes and are considered moral under theories of contractarianism.
- When a patient receives a negative prognosis and physicians can confirm there is no chance of rehabilitation or recovery then stopping treatment, increasing painkillers, and eventually the act of euthanasia itself, can be considered ethical suggestions if made by the patient voluntarily.
- If a physician, or anyone else for that matter, were to make the end-of-life decision for a fully autonomous person this is viewed as unethical and considered murder.
- A patient must receive a fatal prognosis, or have little to no chance of recovery, for euthanasia to be considered ethical, otherwise, it is labeled a suicide.

- Samantha Prince

My opinion

I believe the right to euthanasia in a proper medical environment and under the supervision of professionals is a human right.

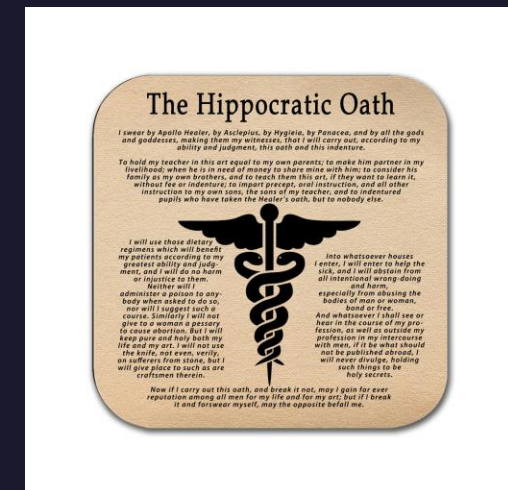
A person's life is their own to live out as they wish and especially in the United States and other free countries why should someone not also have the choice of how theirs should end, when mentally capable of deciding.

I fortunately have a recent family with a lack of painful ending, but I have heard of stories where patients that had terminal life ending situations and due to a lack of available euthanasia had quiet painful endings

- Mason Kramer

Reasons...

- The Hippocratic Oath with its origins going back to the 5th century B.C that is sworn upon by medical professionals around the world does not state specifically state the use euthanasia as being morally wrong because euthanasia is meant to limit and further prevent pain which is different from the "administer of poison" and "using the knife" which would afflict a painful death.
- As of 1977 to the modern day eight of some of the most progressive states in the United States of America have legalize the use of euthanasia as an end to life treatment with many more already allowing death with dignity.
- Medical professionals' job is the further prevention of pain and euthanasia as an option can offer great relief to some of the most affect patients who are nearing their end.



Why we chose euthanasia

I chose this topic because it felt personal to me. With my recent experience of the issue, dealing with my grandfather's end-of-life care, I felt a connection to euthanasia. I used to feel it was a weak person's way out but visualizing it firsthand, it required strength from the physician, patient, and family.

I wanted to share my story and maybe open some minds to the idea of euthanasia.

As a student hoping to become a physician, understanding the facts and consequences of euthanasia are detrimental.

- Samantha Prince

I also chose the topic because of a personal view that limiting a patient's pain should be of the utmost importance in medical environments.

Types of euthanasia are already used other care fields such as in veterinary when an animal is sick past a point of recovery and is relieved of its pain, so why not provide equal or better care to humans.

Also, as a pre-med student hoping to one day become a physician, I want to be able to provide the best available care to my future patients which will not always include a form of euthanasia, but its accessibility would limit potential patients' live ending pain.

- Mason Kramer



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Thank You

A presentation by

Samantha Prince and Mason Kramer

