

CARE Leadership Programme. Friday 6 July 2012
End of Life Issues – Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide

What do the words mean?

Euthanasia is the intentional killing by act or omission of a person whose life is felt not be worth living (HOPE 1992). Voluntary euthanasia (VE) – the patient requests it; Non-voluntary euthanasia (NVE) – the life of an incompetent patient is ended; Involuntary euthanasia (IVE) – the life of a competent patient is ended without their request.

In euthanasia, a doctor administers a lethal injection. In **physician assisted suicide (PAS)** a doctor prescribes lethal medication which the patient him/herself consumes. The two are not significantly different ethically – ‘assisted suicide is euthanasia one step back’. (**Assisted dying** is a disingenuous euphemism, variously defined but includes both.)

What does UK law say?

Both are illegal. Euthanasia is treated as murder (Murder Act 1965) with mandatory life imprisonment on conviction. AS falls under the 1961 Suicide Act (amended 2009) with up to 14 years’ imprisonment on conviction.

What about other jurisdictions?

Illegal everywhere except in Netherlands (VE + PAS); Belgium (VE + ?AS); Luxembourg (VE + PAS); Switzerland (AS); Oregon (PAS); Washington (PAS) and Montana (PAS).

What does the Bible say?

Image of God – see Genesis 9:5-6

6th Commandment – Exodus 20:13

A warfare scenario – Judges 9:50-55

Death of Saul – compare 1 Samuel 31:3-5 and 1 Chronicles 10:3-5 with 2 Samuel 1:5-16

The ‘Golden Rule’ (Matthew 7:12) is the only text often cited in favour

At the very least, nowhere does the Bible support euthanasia. Suicide is viewed negatively.

What are the arguments for and against?

Autonomy: we want it. But:

Affects the autonomy of the doctor and family.

Behind most requests, lies the real question...deal with that and the request goes away.

There are some deliberated requests: why can’t they be allowed VE or AS?

Tolerating VE leads to NVE and IVE (Dutch studies).

Compassion: we need it

Stands or falls on the answer to the question: Do we have to kill the patient to kill the symptoms? Hospice/palliative care has answered that ‘No’.

Public policy: we can control it

Dutch experience proves we cannot. When we change law, three things happen: we do what the new law says; we go further; and we change the climate of public opinion.

Where are we now?

BBC cheerleading constant media pressure; Falconer Commission report; cases of Nicklinson and Martin; BMA continues opposition; Dignity in Dying mass lobby of Parliament re their PAS Bill due in Lords next year

Dr Andrew Fergusson, Chairman of the Advisory Group of the Care Not Killing Alliance

Care Not Killing www.carenotkilling.org.uk

Christian Medical Fellowship www.cmf.org.uk

CARE Leadership Programme. Friday 10 May 2013
End of Life Issues – Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide

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Where are we now?

BBC cheerleading constant media pressure; cases of Nicklinson/Lamb and Martin 13-16 May; Dignity in Dying PAS Bill due in Lords 15 May; Margo MacDonald

Dr Andrew Fergusson, Chairman of the Advisory Group of the Care Not Killing Alliance

Care Not Killing www.carenokilling.org.uk Christian Medical Fellowship www.cmf.org.uk

CARE Leadership Programme. Friday 31 January 2014
End of Life Issues – Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide

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Where are we now?

Media pressure; cases of Nicklinson/Lamb and Martin – awaiting Supreme Court judgment; Dignity in Dying PAS Bill in Lords next session?; Margo MacDonald relaunch in Scotland

Dr Andrew Fergusson, Chairman of the Advisory Group of the Care Not Killing Alliance

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