

Assisted suicide

Today we struggle with the medical ethics on issues of life and death in a culture that denies the terminally and the infirm the right to maintain control over when to end their lives. They come to realize that at some level we are all dependent on others.

From infancy to death, the cradle to the grave we rely on a number of people. One such person is our physician. In today's society, a physician is expected to be dedicated to the restoration of health, and the mending of the broken body.

What happens when the body is past mending? Is euthanasia the answer? What do I believe? Through discussions with my uncle, David Hollett M.D, and first-hand observation of the suffering of loved ones close to death.

I have come to the conclusion that when the body is past mending, the current practice by physicians is to medicate and provide a pain management program through strong narcotics.

This often causes patients in their last days, months, and even years, to fail to recognize loved ones, hallucinate, suffer from confusion, and even cause, in the most severe cases be unconscious.

There are two types of euthanasia active and passive. Active euthanasia, which is the injecting of a lethal drug, which ends a life, is opposed by many people and is illegal in most countries. This method requires one person to kill another. This is also known as physician-assisted suicide. Fewer people oppose passive euthanasia, which is the withdrawal of life-sustaining medical treatment. The supporters contend that through passive euthanasia, the person dies what would be considered a natural death. Possibly God's will.

In 1990, the Supreme Court of the United States ruled that patients have a right to passive euthanasia if they have clearly made their wishes known. People can do so through living wills and by granting powers of attorney. A living will is a legal document addressed to a patient's family and health care providers stating what type of treatment the patient wishes or does not wish to receive if he becomes terminally ill, unconscious, or permanently comatose (McGraw-Hill). A power of attorney is the legal right to act as the attorney or agent of another person, including handling that person's financial matters (McGraw-Hill). But what about active euthanasia?

Currently only Oregon and the Netherlands have laws permitting physician-assisted suicide. There was little need to until Dr. Jack Kevorkian, a 70-year-old retired pathologist from Royal Oak, Michigan. Dr. Kevorkian used the bully pulpit to strongly advocate for allowing patients the right to decide when they no longer wished to live. . He challenged the legal system by openly admitting to giving assistance to patients with no possibility of any relief from their pain and suffering. He has admitted to extending help to 130 patients up to now (Naidu). Because the Michigan Supreme Court upheld a lower court decision, it was ruled that the current law outlawing assisted suicide was constitutional. Dr. Kevorkian, also known as Dr. Death, was charged in 1999, tried, and convicted of second-degree murder and illegal delivery of a

controlled substance. This was decided after the authorities reviewed a tape originally sent to 60 Minutes. The tape was of Kevorkian directly administering drugs to a patient with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis or Lou Gehrig's disease. The judge sentenced him to serve concurrent prison terms of 10 to 25 years for the murder charge and 3 to 7 years for the drug charge (Globe). He is still in jail.

I believe that life is a gift from the divine Creator, temporarily entrusted to us as faithful guardians. Therefore, death, in and of itself, is not a road to heaven and should not be contemplated as such. I find my answers to these questions in the bible in various scriptures. James 5:16 advised that when we sin it is important for us to confess not only to God but also to our fellow Christians.

How does one do this if they have just ended their life? In Corinthians 3:16 it is stated you know that yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you? If anyone destroys gods temple, God will destroy