

**Voluntary
stopping
of eating
and drinking
to hasten
death**



Eva E. Bolt

Main message

- VSTED can be relatively comfortable,
- if...

Primary Care Patients Hastening Death by Voluntarily Stopping Eating and Drinking

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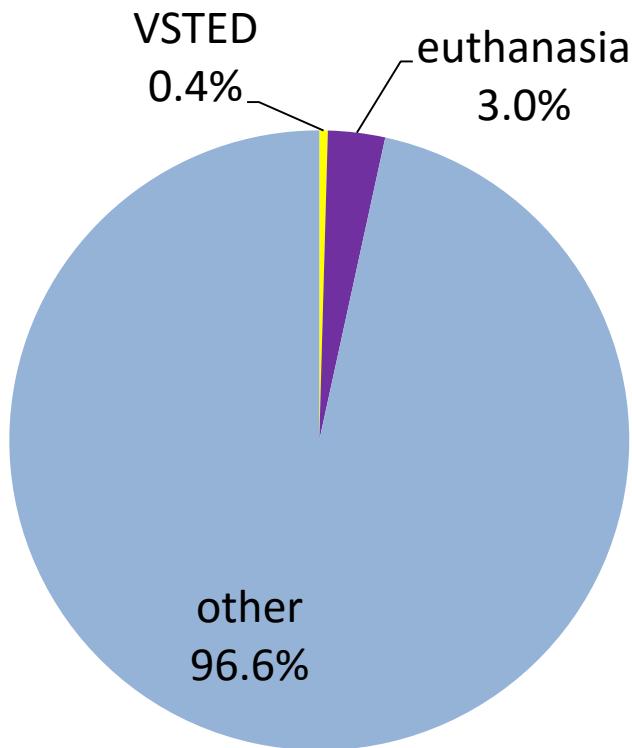
708 family physicians (72%)



99 patients



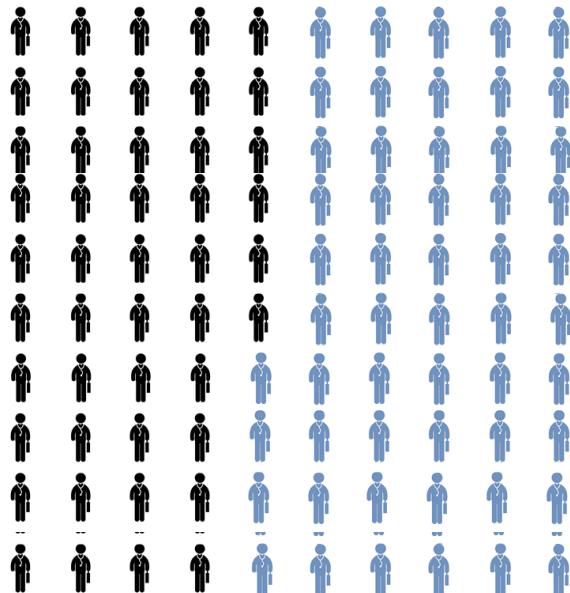
Deaths in the Netherlands (2010)¹



1. Van der Heide 2010;

Family physicians and VSTED

- 46% of family physicians had experience with VSTED



VSTED and Dutch physicians

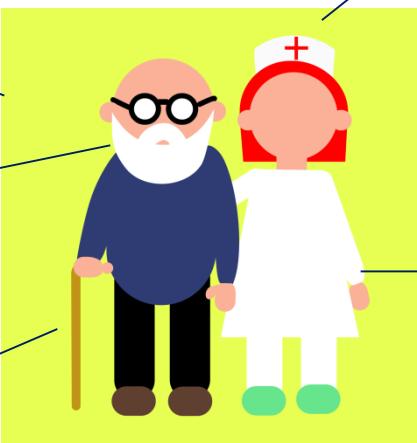


Dutch professional guideline:

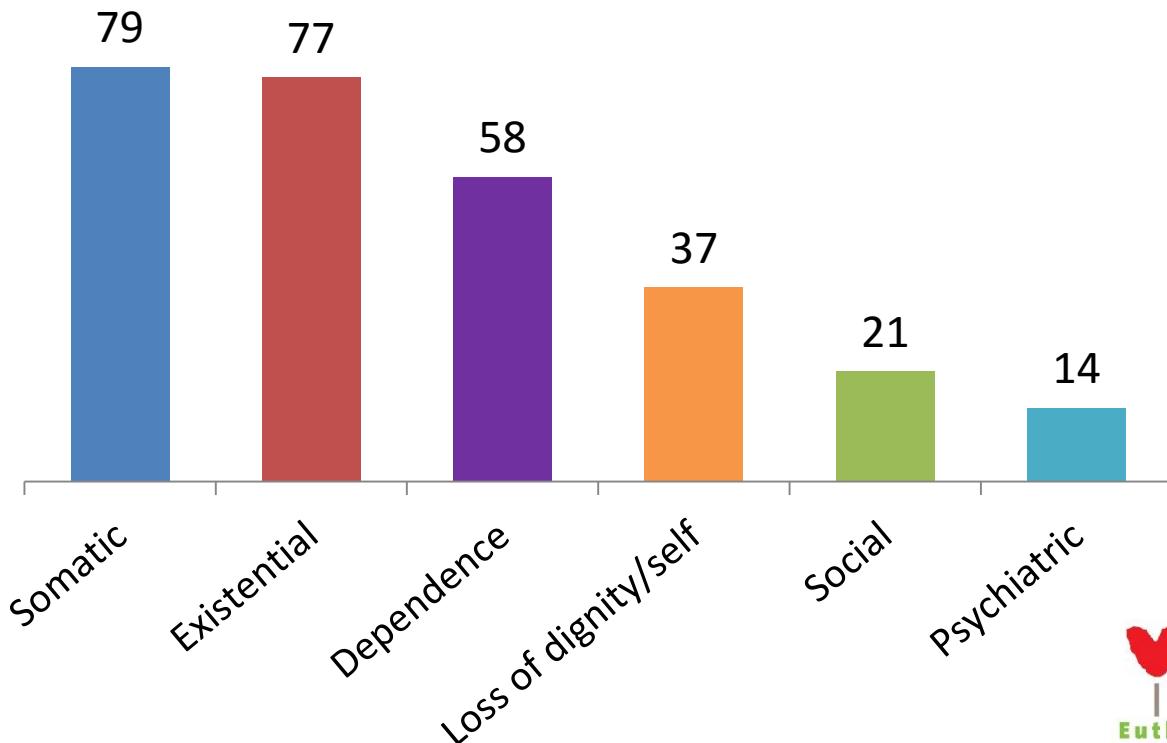
- Freedom to refuse food and fluid
- Right to relief of distress¹



Most patients:

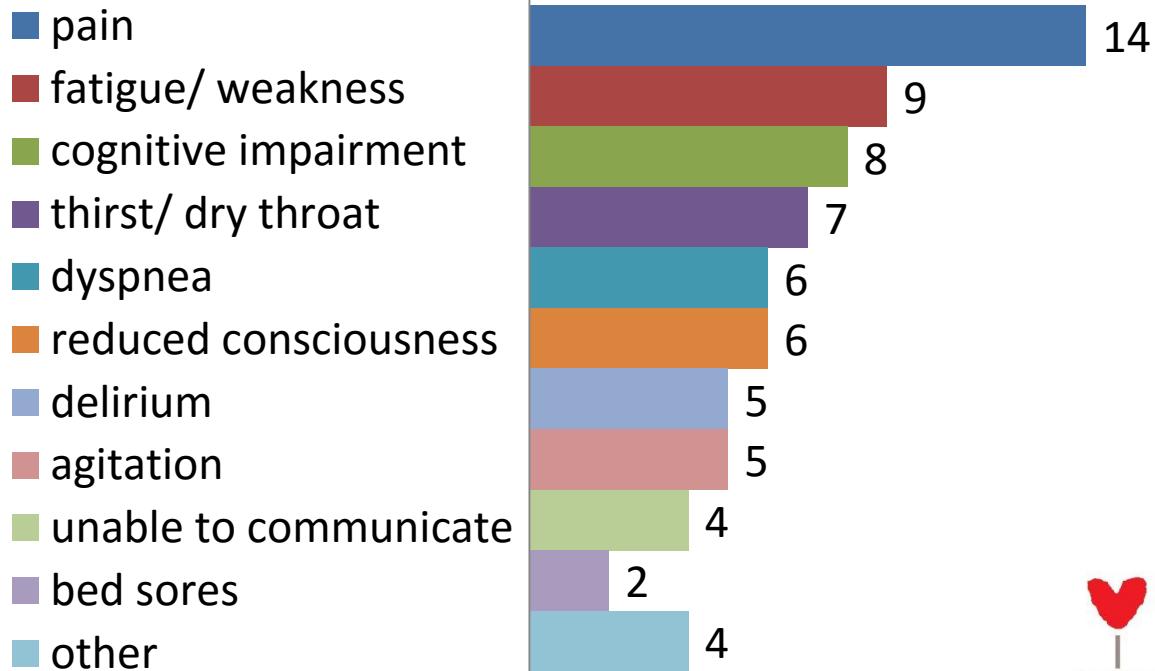
- 
- single/
widow(er)
(75%)
 - 80
years or
older
(80%)
 - physical
illness (70%,
27% cancer)
 - life expectancy of
less than a year
(74%)
 - care
dependent
(ECOG-PS 3-4)
(76%)
 - no previous request for
euthanasia (81%)

Motives (%)



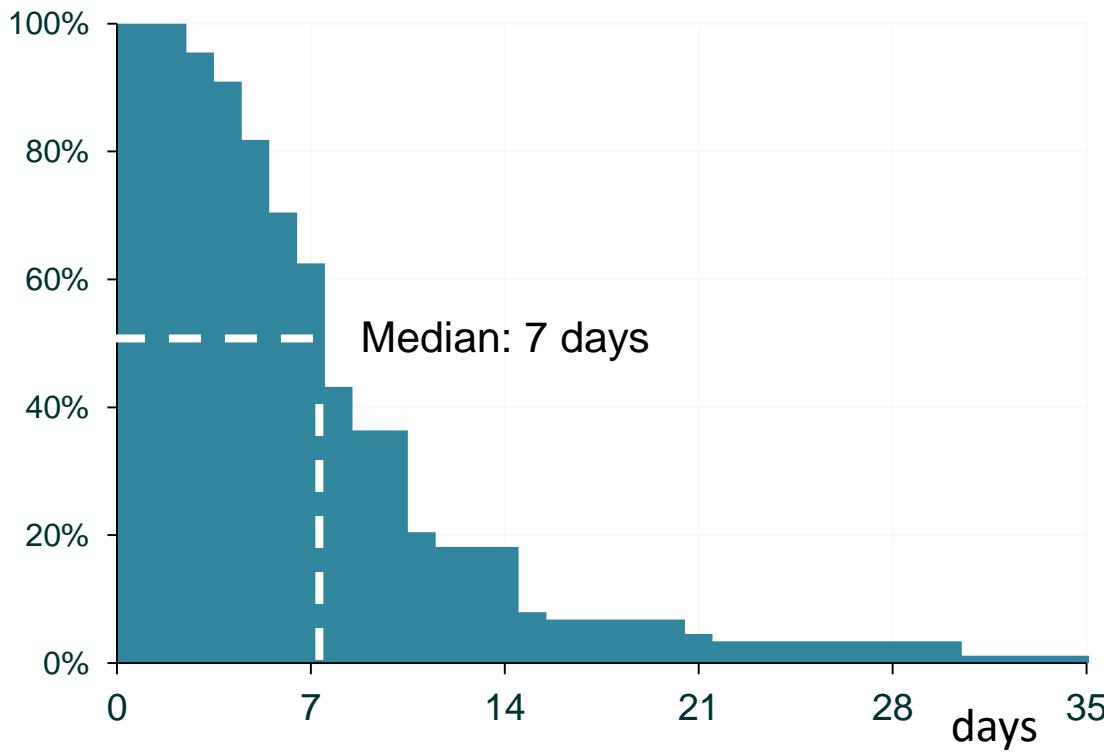


Symptoms in last 3 days (36% of cases)



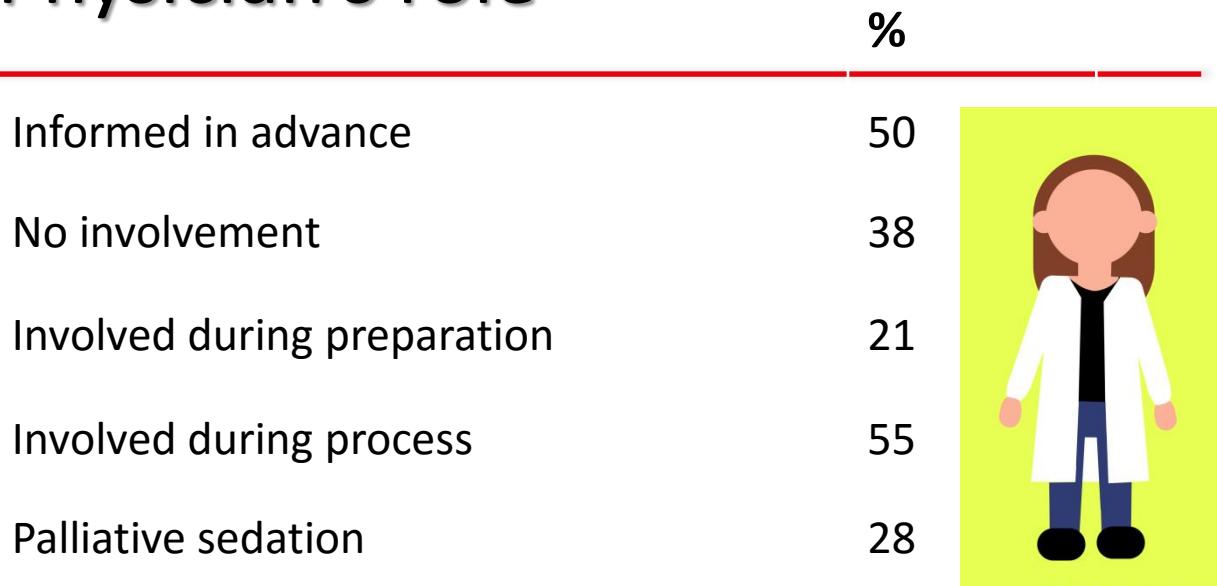
Time until death

survival



Median: 7 days

Physician's role



Discussion

- Strengths
 - 99 cases
 - Close patient-physician relationship in the Netherlands
- Limitations
 - Indirect data
 - Limited to home/hospice/residential homes
 - Retrospective data collection

VSTED - euthanasia

- Different practices;
 - Patient-controlled vs physician-controlled
 - Prolonged vs acute
 - Natural vs unnatural
- Different people (compared to euthanasia requests)
 - Median age 84 vs 69
 - Cancer 27% vs 80%
- Deliberate choice
 - Few had also requested euthanasia

Conclusion



Advice for physicians²

- First:
 - Talk
 - Inform
 - Organize
 - Plan ahead
- Then:
 - Coordinate
 - Prevent, detect and treat
 - Care for family



Questions

Discussion

Own
experiences?

Contact:

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See also:

E.E. Bolt et al. Primary care patients hastening death by voluntarily stopping eating and drinking. Ann Fam Med 2015;13 (5).

E.E. Bolt et al. Bewust afzien van eten en drinken. Ned Tijdschr Geneeskd 2016;160:D84.

References

1. Van der Heide A et al. *Euthanasie en andere medische beslissingen rond het levenseinde. Sterfgevallenonderzoek 2010.* The Hague: ZonMW, 2012.
2. KNMG en V&VN. *KNMG en V&VN-handreiking Zorg voor mensen die bewust afzien van eten en drinken om het levenseinde te bespoedigen.* Utrecht 2014.
3. Ganzini L, Goy ER, Miller LL, Harvath TA, Jackson A, Delorit MA. *Nurses' experiences with hospice patients who refuse food and fluids to hasten death.* N Engl J Med. 2003;349(4):359-365.
4. Chabot B. Auto-euthanasie. Verborgen stervenswegen in gesprek met naasten. Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Bert Bakker, 2007.