



Death with Dignity: What's in a Name?

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Why Death with Dignity?

- Medical standard of care
- Challenges our opponents' efforts to reframe the debate with fear
- Distinguishes between terms which have legally different definitions
- Respectful of patients

Medical Standard of Care

- Death with Dignity laws offer a specific practice and set of guidelines, established as an appropriate standard of care for the practice of medicine with terminally ill individuals.
- In the US, Death with Dignity practice is different from euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide:
 - only a qualified patient may participate,
 - must self-administer the medication after following a specific set of steps spelled out by law.

Medical Standard of Care

- **Term resulted from**

- a political battle attempting to fundamentally change law
- opposition fighting against us with a seemingly unending stream of money
- a winning historic political strategy, part of which was naming the law

Fear-based Campaigning by Opponents

- They know Death with Dignity is compelling to and supported by most Americans.
- They prefer to run a campaign based in fear.
- They attack the language because they are trying to hold onto the status quo in support of their religious beliefs.
- They know Death with Dignity polls well and press for language favorable to them.

Fear-based Campaigning by Opponents

- Death with Dignity polls on average 5 to 6 points higher than Aid in Dying and sometimes 7 to 10 points higher than anything with the word suicide in it.
- In the US, Death with Dignity is a language that is supported nearly everywhere.

Clarifying Legal Definitions

- Words can be charged with emotion.
- Unlike the Netherlands, in the US, euthanasia bring to mind actions where
 - the patient has no or little choice;
 - decisions are made without their full involvement or support.
- Death with Dignity is much clearer in that the patient has made his/her own choice.

Clarifying Legal Definitions

- It's not euthanasia.
- While euthanasia or physician-assisted suicide are illegal in most states, the practice of Death with Dignity is lawful in OR, WA, MT, VT, CA (as of 6/9/2016).

Clarifying Legal Definitions

- Aid in dying is fast becoming the medical term for the practice; however, it is rarely successful to name something after a medical practice.
- Terms like services for the mentally retarded, pro-abortion movement, or homosexual rights, have been rejected because they introduce bias.
 - clinically descriptive
 - not appropriate for use in the general public

Respectful of Patients

- Patients using the law want no affiliation with the term “suicide” or any derivative of it.
- There is a substantive difference in tone, demeanor, attitude, and personality between someone who is actively suicidal and a person who is seeking Death with Dignity because of suffering or symptoms related to a terminal illness.

“I’m not committing suicide, and I don’t want to die. I was upset by media reports that I intend to ‘kill’ myself. I’m not killing myself; bone cancer is taking care of that. I may take the option of shortening the agony of my final hours.”

—JACK NEWBOLD

“All I am asking for is to have some choice over how I die. Portraying me as suicidal is disrespectful and hurtful to me and my loved ones. It adds insult to injury by dismissing all that I have already endured...”

—LOUISE SCHAEFER

Concepts and Definitions – Death with Dignity: What's in a Name?

“I have no conflicts of interest relevant for Euthanasia 2016 and have nothing to disclose.”

~Peg Sandeen



QUESTIONS & ANSWERS



Thank you!

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