

# Autonomy – A contested concept



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# Disclosure Statement

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Nothing to disclose

# Background

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Since the 1970s health care settings emphasize on patient autonomy

- Changing doctor-patient relationship
- Life-prolonging medical technologies

Different conceptions of autonomy can lead to problematic ambiguity

(Agich 2003)



# Review 1998-2015

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Topics	N.
EoL decisions	14
Advanced care planning	6
Euthanasia	3
Physician-assisted suicide	3
Palliative care	3
Resuscitation	3
Life prolonging treatment	3
Death	2
Long term care	1
Dementia	1

# I. Unconstrained decision-making

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- Competent and autonomous choices without the interference of others
- A notion of independence
- Overcome dependence and gain control

# II. Shared decision-making

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- Allows for interdependence
- Recognizes social relations
- Decisions take place within a social and cultural framework

# Liberal vs. Relational

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- The patients right
  - Against medical paternalism
  - Ideal for care
  - Respecting patient autonomy
- Criticizes the liberal tradition of autonomy
  - The interdependency between people
  - Shared decision-making caregiver(s) and patient

# Liberal notion

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“The foundation of preventive ethics in end-of-life decision making is **respect for the patient’s autonomy**. This ethical principle obliges health care professionals **to acknowledge and respect** the patient’s values and beliefs, **to provide** the patient with information requisite to make an informed choice, **to prevent** substantial control over or coercion in the patient’s decision-making process, and **to implement** the patient’s decision unless there is compelling ethical justification for not doing so” (Braun & McCullough 2011).



# Relational notion

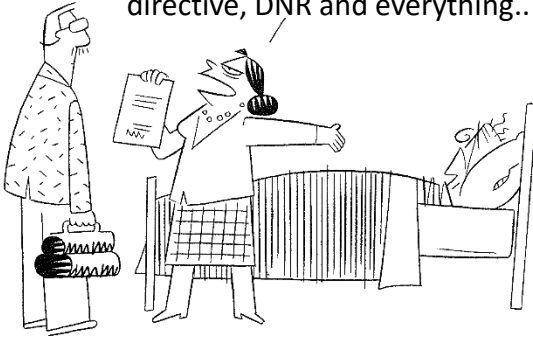
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“Our modern health care system assumes the superiority of the choice paradigm with little regard for the **messy realities of tragic choices**. This idealized version of autonomy is one of “informed free choice” ... sick persons require **the help of others** to make autonomous decisions” (Botti et al. 2009).

# Liberal vs. Relational

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Father has the right to euthanasia! He has an advanced directive, DNR and everything..!



Peter de Wit (2013)

Oh would you be so kind to remove this chair for me please?



Peter de Wit (2013)

# The one-sided analysis of autonomy

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New trend developing?

Main focus on liberal perspective of autonomy

- I. Explanation from cultural perspective
- II. Explanation from research methodology

Need for a well-informed empirical ethics

# Thank you

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*Life is pleasant. Death is peaceful. It's the transition that's troublesome.*

- Isaac Asimov (1920 - 1992)

# References

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1. Agich, G. (2003). *Dependence and Autonomy in Old Age: An Ethical Framework for Long-Term Care. Dependence and Autonomy in Old Age. An Ethical framework for long-term care.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
2. Karlsson, C., & Berggren, I. (2011). Dignified end-of-life care in the patients' own homes. *Nursing Ethics, 18*, 374–385 12p.
3. Lind, R., Nortvedt, P., Lorem, G., & Hevrøy, O. (2013). Family involvement in the end-of-life decisions of competent intensive care patients. *Nursing Ethics, 20*(1), 61–71. =
4. De Wit, P. (2013). *We gaan u eens lekker doodmaken,* Uitgeverij de Harmonie i.s.m. NVVE.

# Review

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1. Identifying articles related to the search terms



2. Analysing articles according to exclusion and inclusion criteria



3. Applying qualitative content analysis to review the data

# Conclusion

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- Main focus on liberal perspective of autonomy
- New trend developing?
- A well-informed empirical ethics