

A demand to die – donald 'dax' case essay



**ASSIGN
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In the case, Donald C, had suffered major skin burns and required to undergo repeated immersion in alcohol baths and surgeries. He underwent a lot of suffering due to the severe burns. Besides, he lost his vision, his hands, ears and his legs. Donald in no way could lead a normal life. Donald wanted the doctors to end his life so that an end to his sufferings could be put. The question here would be if the healthcare providers are morally permitted to grant him the right to die.

Firstly, it would be important to determine the patient’s mental competency. Donald may have suffered mentally out of the condition due to associated depression and distress. This would certainly affect the way in which he emotionally functioned and made decisions. According to Donald’s mother, Donald may have not acted rationally in the past, in the sense that if he liked anything, he was dedicated to it, and if he hated anything, he completely opposed it. Donald, may have been a stubborn man, but was also determined. In the end, the psychologist found that Donald was determined to obtain something that was not rational (he may not have been mentally competent) (Soman, 2008).

There are several moral principles that would apply in this case:-

1. Utilitarian Principles – This is based on the efforts that any action should be done in such a way that it would maximize the net social benefits. It would aim at increasing the social good and would minimize any harm that can be caused to others. The social good can be in the form of good health and economic benefits. In this case, the utilitarian principles would not apply as Donald is not being kept alive at the social costs. However, if permitting

euthanasia in this case, may lead to a precedent and would enable performance of mercy killing even in cases where suffering and pain was mild.

2. Rights principle – According to this principle, a person could do whatever he/she wanted, provided it did not infringe on the others rights. Right to speech, freedom, education, etc, can be said to be following the rights principle. In this case, Donald's right to euthanasia did not infringe on the other people's rights and hence could be morally permitted. However, the other people could not put an end to Donald's life as it would be considered murder or manslaughter (if it was not rationally justified). These rights may not be absolute if they tend to affect others especially.

3. Right to distributive justice – It is a moral principle in which fairness and distribution of the benefits would be sought without unduly harming others. In this case, Donald had a problem with his health and was suffering. Hence, in order to be fair to him, his life had to be ended.

4. Ethics of care – According to this principle, it is more important to care for people with greater relationships than for strangers. The best interests of the closer relationships need to be considered. In this case, Donald is a person in need of help. His sufferings have to be put an end to and the best way to do it would be to put an end through euthanasia. The needs of others in this case may not be present as there are no conflicting interests.

5. Virtue ethics – It is important to demonstrate positive virtues (such as compassion, cooperativeness, courage, fairness, etc) than negative vices (such as cowardice, neglect, selfishness, dishonesty, etc). In this case

positive virtues such as compassion and fairness would apply for Donald to overcome his suffering and pain (Schumann, 2003).

The principles that applied in this include the rights principle, distributive justice, ethics of care and virtue of ethics.

In the case of Sue Rodriguez, the condition was a terminal illness, and she was expected to die within 6 months to one year. There was no hope for her as her condition was not going to improve nor there was any kind of treatment to reduce her suffering. In her case, the right to autonomy had a stronger implication than in the case of Donald. The right to autonomy would be based on putting an end to needless suffering, especially if the person is mentally competent and can make a logical decision. In this case, Sue Rodriguez was suffering and there was no evidence to prove that her condition would get better. Hence, the right to autonomy and euthanasia may have not been permitted by law (as there was no provision in Canada at that time to permit euthanasia), but may be morally and ethically permitted, based on the grounds of virtue ethics (compassion), ethics of care, rights to principle and right to autonomy (CBC News, 2007).

In the case of Donald, there was a chance that his condition may improve as the doctors could restore his vision and functioning of the hands and legs to certain extent. Donald may have been suffering, but it is not needless and useless, as there was a chance that he could get back to normal (following administration of treatment). Withholding or withdrawing any treatment in the case of Donald would only mean an increase in the suffering when there are chances that his condition would get better.

The right to autonomy in this case did not hold a stronger ground as Donald did not suffer from a terminal illness and there was every indication from past cases that he would get better (Colero, 2008). Besides, Donald was not competent (to a greater extent) to make a logical decision as in the past it has been found that he lacked insight and did not do things fairly. The right to autonomy may not be absolute. In this case, conflicting issues need to be taken into consideration. Some of the moral principles may be supportive of Donald's right to euthanasia. However, the physicians promised him certain amount of improvement, which could morally nullify his right to autonomy. Hence, Donald may not be ethically or morally right to seek euthanasia.