

Euthanasia essay sample

[Health & Medicine](#), [Euthanasia](#)



Euthanasia, which is regarded as the practice of voluntarily/intentionally ending life so as to relieve pain and suffering, has attracted a heated debate in the social, medical and religious circles (Heather, 1998). The definition of this term varies depending on the country in question. For instance, in Holland, it is regarded as termination of the life of a patient by a medical doctor following the patient's approval (Heather, 1998). In the UK, the British House of Lords Committee on Medical Ethics holds the opinion that this is a practice executed with the aim of ending life in order to relieve burdensome suffering (Heather, 1998). Euthanasia has three distinct categories namely: involuntary, non-voluntary and voluntary. Voluntary euthanasia involves ending life in a painless manner and is legally acceptable. On the other hand, mercy killing or non-voluntary euthanasia occurs when the patient or close relatives cannot give the permission to end life of the patient in question. It is seen as being done against the will of the patient. Moreover, involuntary euthanasia takes center stage when the physician ends life of the patient against the wish of the patient and yet the patient had the ability to decide either yes or not. Non-voluntary and involuntary forms of euthanasia are illegal. In this paper, two incidences involving the ethical implications of euthanasia are discussed. Two case studies are examined.

In the first case study, Donald Dax Cowart illustrates his dissatisfaction following the doctor's failure to end his life upon his request. Dax, as he is commonly known, suffered serious burns following a plane crash, and that incident left him blind, without hands and with a significant loss of his body mass. Following those predicaments, Dax was psychologically affected and he lost hope of living. Dax requested his doctors to end his life, but they

turned down his request. He also attempted to commit suicide on a number of occasions. However, with time, he managed to move on and in fact went to college and became a lawyer. Dax's story has become the basis of many medical ethics controversies (accessed from You Tube).

The second case study of Terri Schiavo is a perfect illumination of the ethical dilemmas characterizing euthanasia. Terri went into coma after she collapsed out of cardiac arrest and damaged her brain. Following a few months of medical care, Terri's diagnosis was pronounced as that of vegetative state. The medical staff tried all manner of therapies to restore her health, but all was in vain. Terri's husband was so concerned that he requested the doctors to terminate the life of his wife as he could not bear seeing her suffer. However, Terri's parents opposed their son-in-law's opinion. This led to a series of court battles in which various court rulings seconded the husband, while others supported Terri's parents. The case became a national debate and President Bush had to sign into law a bill that sought to stop doctors from ending the life of Terri. In the last version of the ruling, the judge permitted euthanasia. Terri was involved to some extent in those decisions (accessed from You Tube).

The two case studies are perfect examples of the ethical challenges that euthanasia presents. It is clear that in some instances, the current definition of euthanasia is not inclusive of all possible cases that may arise. The most important point to note here is that there should consultation with the patient prior to executing euthanasia. In cases where the patient cannot communicate, doctors and close family members must hold consultations

prior to deciding to end the life of the patient. The wishes of the patient must always come first.

References

Dax Case 1 Retrieved from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IsxaaMbZMtA&feature=related>.

Heather, D. (1998). " Euthanasia". In Chadwick, Ruth. Encyclopedia of Applied Ethics 2. Washington, D. C.: Academic Press.

The Terry Schiavo Documentary. Retrieved from <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cki55BM42kw>.