

Euthanasia

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It happened one morning when I entered World History. I opened the door, stepped inside the classroom, and sat in my seat.

My attention directed itself to the front of the room and there, written on the board, was the word ‘ euthanasia.’ I stared at the board with a blank stare, thinking to myself, “ What the heck is euthanasia?” The definition of euthanasia that my teacher provided was ‘ mercy killing.’ A two-word definition did not satisfy me, so I did some research. The Oxford English Dictionary provided me with: Euthanasia – the action of inducing a gentle and easy death. What I learned in World History that day was not about the French Revolution or the five major religions in the world... it was whether euthanasia should be legalized. It greatly surprised me to learn that human beings do argue about whether or not we have the right to choose how we die.

While it may seem to some that euthanasia is about a person’s choice, it is actually an issue of public trust because it is a physician’s job to make sure that the patient gets better. It is true that the quality of a person’s life contributes to the choices they make. Should a patient be suffering greatly from a terminal illness, such as cancer or heart disease, they should be able to decide when enough is enough. As stated by Marcia Angell who is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Social Medicine at Harvard Medical School, “ To require dying patients to endure unrelievable suffering, regardless of their wishes is callous and unseemly.

Death is hard enough without being bullied.” Patients are not incapable of their autonomy just because they are bedridden. And that puts us in a nasty,

achy situation: It's painful to imagine our loved ones in any kind of pain; we'd rather not think about it at all! But we need to prepare ourselves for these kinds of situations. What is really best for our families? Nevertheless, there is hope. According to the Family Research Council, "...there is no such thing as a life not worth living. Every life holds promise, even if disadvantaged by developmental disability, injury, disease, or advanced aging.

" We can't abandon our loved ones when they need us the most. Euthanasia would mean surrender. Euthanasia would mean giving up. That's not the message we want to convey to those we cherish. They've given us their faith and trust.

When patients feel like they've hit rock bottom, when they feel like they've reached their all-time low, one of the best things to do is simply be there for them and hold their hand. Trust is an enormous factor that contributes to a person's choice. Martin Levin, MPH, states that it costs about \$10,000 total for every patient who undergoes euthanasia. Essentially, that money can go towards caring for the patient instead of ending their life. Most importantly, those who take care of our society, our physicians who keep us healthy... they've sworn themselves to the Hippocratic Oath.

A pledge to this oath means that anyone practicing medicine promises to treat their patients to the best of their abilities. The Hippocratic Oath is the grounds for trust between medicine and society. The American Medical Association states that dying patients should still continue to receive all kinds of support: care, comfort, emotional support, communication, etc.

Legalizing euthanasia will only raise suspicions and bad reputations for those in the medical field. We don't want a society where doctors only do their job for the money; we want people who will actually take care of us. And at the end of the day, it hit me: why the heck did we talk about euthanasia in World History? Ladies and gentlemen, we take Social Studies to learn about society and learn from past mistakes.

If too much freedom is given, realistically, there are people who will take advantage of that. Euthanasia is teetering on that list of potential dangers to society. We can't afford to destroy any trust between the communities and their hospitals. Euthanasia does not shorten lives... it ends them. While freedom sounds amazing to our ears, there are some things that just shouldn't be.