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



Emi Kozaki SOCY100 Section B Feb. 5, 2013 The Right to Die On August 4, 1993, a man by the name of Dr. Jack Kevorkian, a retired pathologist, helped a 30 year old man with a disease commit suicide. Kevorkian has assisted in numerous suicides since then; the 30 year old man was the 17th person to commit suicide with Kevorkian. It wasn't until he did it on television in 1998 that he got charged with second degree murder. He completed his sentence in 2007 and then died of circulatory problems in 2011 (Schaefer, 300).

Physician-assisted suicide has been and still is one of the biggest issues in the United States and other countries. Euthanasia is known as "act of bringing about the death of a hopelessly ill and suffering person in a relatively quick and painless way for reasons of mercy." The debate over euthanasia and assisted suicide focuses more on cases with older people, although it can involve younger adults with terminal diseases, or even children. Surveys have shown public opinions about this controversial practice, 71% of respondents say that a physician should be legally allowed to end a patient's life if both the patient and relatives make such request. Although formal norms against euthanasia are still strict, according to an estimate by the American Hospital Association, 70 percent of all deaths in the United States were quietly negotiated with the patients, family members, and physicians agreeing not to use life-support (Schaefer, 301). There are articles where it has mentioned how people fight to get their "right to die". For instance, Tony Nicklinson, a man who had a stroke in 2005 which left him with 'locked-in syndrome' — mentally sound but paralyzed from the neck down and unable to speak, was physically unable to commit suicide, and took his 'right-to-die' case to the High Court. At the High Court in London, he

described his existence as 'dull, miserable, demeaning, undignified and intolerable' as he began his landmark case that challenges the law on murder. He wanted three judges to rule that if, and when, he decides he wants to die, a doctor will be immune from prosecution if they help him. During the court hearing he mentioned how much he didn't want to live anymore and how he has the support from his wife and daughters with his decision to end his life (Miller, NPG). Unlike, Nicklinson, the American Medical Association (AMA) believe that the physician's role is to make a diagnosis, and sound judgments about medical treatment, not whether the patient's life is worth living. They have an obligation to perform sufficient care, not to refrain from giving the patient food and water until that person dies. Medical advances in recent years have made it possible to keep terminally ill people alive for beyond a length of time even if it is without any hope of recovery or improvement (Opinion 2. 211 - Physician-Assisted Suicide, NPG). Some other articles believe that other than promoting abuse and giving doctors the right to murder, Euthanasia also contradicts religious beliefs. Euthanasia manages to contradict more than just one religion and is considered to be gravely sinful. For instance, the Roman Catholic Church has its own opinion on Euthanasia. The Vatican's 1980 Declaration on Euthanasia said in part " No one can make an attempt on the life of an innocent person without opposing God's love for that person, without violating a fundamental right and therefore without committing a crime of the utmost sin." It also says that " intentionally causing one's own death, or suicide is therefore equally wrong as murder, such an action on the part of a person is to be considered as a rejection of God's sovereignty and loving plan (Humphry and Wickett, NPG)."

Going back and forth between the textbook and other online articles it seems like everyone has their own point of view. In the book, people seem to be okay with euthanasia as long as the person who wants to get assisted suicide knows for sure that's what they want to do. For instance, in the article about Tony Nicklinson, this seems to be true. Even though he had to go to high court to get it approved, he still wanted to end his life because of how miserable he was and how he couldn't do anything after his stroke. In other cases people were offended and were against euthanasia. They believed that there are other ways to relieve pain without having to get assisted suicide. In my opinion, using strict guidelines and procedures I believe that euthanasia should be allowed in the United States. An individual's right to determine the time and manner of their death is more important than keeping a suffering person alive for the sake of preserving life. I understand that the legalization of euthanasia will most likely lead to an excuse for many people who are not terminally to end their own lives. But I do believe that an evaluation by a mental health professional for those suspected to have clinical depression or mental incompetence can help prevent most of this. There are many good points and bad points to the legalization of assisted suicide like any other controversial issue. I understand it to be a good thing though if a person truly is suffering and has no hopeful prospects for the future. Sources: Humphry, Derek, and Ann Wickett. *The Right to Die: Understanding Euthanasia*. New York: Harper & Row, 1986. Web. 12 February 2013. Miller, Daniel. "My Life Is Miserable, Demeaning and Undignified Says Locked-in Syndrome Sufferer as He Asks High Court Judges to Give Him the Right to Die." *Mail Online*. N. p., 19 June

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