

The euthanasia conflict

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



The conflict of euthanasia has been an ongoing debate in several countries of this world. The debate has mostly been focused on whether it is morally right to perform euthanasia. Even though whether it is right or not is a heavy debate in itself, I would rather focus on who has the right to decide on the performance of euthanasia. Is it the doctors, family, or the patient themselves? Personally I believe that the patient should always have the final say on what happens to them. If the patient is rendered completely unable to make the decision for themselves, then and only then should the family be able to make that decision for them. Euthanasia is a term used to describe "pity killings." There are two main types of euthanasia: passive and active. Passive euthanasia is basically the withholding of treatment to allow the patient to die. Active euthanasia is the administering of medication to assist the patient in dying. In Japan both have been practiced. An example of passive euthanasia happened when 20 elderly patients, most of them unconscious, were not connected to feeding tubes, allowing them to die at a Kochi hospital (Guitierrez). An example of active euthanasia happened when a patient with terminal cancer was given a lethal dose of muscle relaxant by a Kyoto doctor (Guitierrez). In Japan, there are many different views on euthanasia in terms of who should or can decide. "The family has no legal right to give consent or decide for the patients. Only the individual patient has the right to give consent. In the case where the patient has lost consciousness, it is the doctors' legal duty to keep the patient alive," says Ikeda Naoki, a lawyer belonging to the association of Japanese lawyers (Guitierrez). This view is based on guidelines regarding euthanasia set down in Japan. For euthanasia to be legally carried out in Japan there has to be a

certainty of death even with medical assistance (Guitierrez). The suffering of those close to the patient must be considered as well as the suffering of the patient (Guitierrez). The patient has to clearly express a desire to die and the method of killing the patient must be appropriate and performed by a doctor (Guitierrez). There was a case in Japan in which a doctor removed an unconscious man's life support system and allowed him to die (Guitierrez). It seems that the family pressured the doctor to go through with this act (Guitierrez). The court still ruled that the man needed to give his consent to die (Guitierrez). I believe that in this case the ruling wasn't very considerate to the patient's position. The patient was not able to make a decision for himself seeing as how he was unconscious and had no hope for recovery. I think that the family had a right to make the decision for the man to die. Great Britain also faces plenty of controversy over the issue of euthanasia. They even established a special committee to deal with it. The House of Lords Select Committee on Medical Ethics decided that the law should not change regarding euthanasia (Kessel). They agreed that a person has a right to refuse treatment (Kessel). However, they did not think that this warranted a person to legally fight to get help in dying (Kessel). They also made it clear that the views of a patient's family and the medical personnel should be considered when deciding whether to withdraw or withhold treatment (Kessel). So in this case instead of just the patient's views being considered, so are the patient's family and doctor's opinions. I think that Great Britain's outlook on euthanasia is just. They allow a patient to make their own decision and in the case that this is not possible, allow the family to have a say. I like the fact that they seem to have looked at most of the

circumstances in which euthanasia can be involved. The United States probably holds the biggest controversy over euthanasia. Every person that becomes a patient of a U. S. hospital is asked if they want to fill out a living will in case of their death. The biggest controversy is between withdrawing and withholding treatment and assisting others to commit suicide. It is hard for most people to see a difference between the two. In one case a man was convicted with murder for placing poison within his wife's reach (McCord). His wife was dying of multiple sclerosis. In another case the murder charge was dismissed against a man who gave a gun to a person who wanted to commit suicide and did (McCord). It seems to me that here you can clearly see that the United States is divided over which side to take. They have not put a firm stand on their views concerning euthanasia. A big concern in euthanasia is the probability that a doctor may make a mistake and label a patient as terminally ill. If the patient chooses euthanasia then the patient might die for absolutely no reason. A cure might also come up and the patient would already be dead. If this happens there would again be a big controversy over the issue of euthanasia that would definitely be taken to the courts. People who oppose euthanasia are concerned that if accepted it would soon spin out of control. They believe that a doctor's power would vastly increase and that the state would have too much control over human life. They prefer to hold on to the control they believe they have over their own lives. There are several other issues to consider when going over the issue of euthanasia. There are people who are mentally unfit to choose euthanasia. Most people believe that they should not be allowed to make such a decision. There are also people who may not be terminally ill but are

just seriously ill. Most people believe that they too should be able to choose euthanasia. However, others think that this would allow those who are depressed, mentally unfit, or immature to end their lives. Another issue is the physician's oath which requires physicians to lengthen life. If the doctor takes part in euthanasia a contradictory view will be sent out to our society. Most people believe that doctors should not take part in the actual death. They should allow the patient themselves or the family to handle that aspect. Passions is my favorite daytime soap opera. It is interesting to note that for the past couple of weeks they have been covering the issue of euthanasia. Ethan is in the hospital and brain dead because of an ingested poison. He has talked with his wife prior to this incident about what should be done in such a situation. He makes it clear to her and in his living will that he does not want to be kept alive by machines. The soap opera shows the different options that are available for his wife and family. She could just leave him on life support for the rest of his life. She could also sign the documents required and take him off life support. The family can also intervene in the wife's decisions. It is noted that his parents can contest whatever decision his wife makes and make one of their own. In conclusion, there are so many different views on the issue of euthanasia. I believe that there is nothing wrong with using either passive or active euthanasia. Some people believe it is the sole decision of the patient, never mind what state the patient is in. Others believe that the family and doctor should have a say in what happens. However, I stay true to the belief that the decision is conditional. If a patient is incapacitated or not fit to make the decision then it should be left up to the family. In all other cases, the patient should have the last say.

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