

Euthanasia



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Euthanasia can broadly be defined as the process that hastens the death process or death of a person who is terminally ill and there is little hope of recovery. In recent times, euthanasia has come under lot of flak because it is still not a legal option in majority of the countries across the world. The concept of euthanasia is also not favored by people because it is considered morally and ethically wrong by different religions. Gay Williams' (1992) argues that act of euthanasia is against the nature because 'because all the processes of nature are bent towards the end of bodily survival'. But the wider implications of euthanasia are important considerations for near and dear ones of the sick person. I believe that every person should be empowered to make his or her own decisions about his or her welfare and therefore, euthanasia needs to be accepted as legally and medically correct practice under certain conditions.

The traditional approach like medical, behavioral and socio-economic approach to health are popular. The knowledge gained through religious ideologies and guidelines is complemented and supplemented by our inherent tendency to explore and widen its area of influence through all available means. Brandt (1975) states that 'killing a person is not something that is just prima facie wrong in itself; it is wrong roughly only if and because it is an injury of someone, or if and because it is contrary to the known preferences of someone'. Whatever we do, it is based on reasoning or motivating forces that influence our thinking process and the way we think. The principles of patient's autonomy and the right of the patient to decide about his welfare are vital considerations that should be respected. Hence, patient's request for dignified death or euthanasia becomes highly relevant. Euthanasia is highly relevant for people who are in constant pain and may

not even be in a conscious state to acknowledge the people around them. Terminally ill patients who are capable of living a full life or even assisted life and are not continuously suffering unbearable physical pain have the option and right to the natural death. Philippa Foot (1977) says that ‘ encourage patients to make their own contracts with a doctor by making it known whether they wish him to prolong their life in case of painful terminal illness or of incapacity’. Indeed, it is inhuman to make people live through artificial means like medication when they are undergoing huge mental and physical agony when they know that they will not recover!

The psychological repercussion of imminent death when the medications are used to prolong their physical pain is highly distressing for the patient as well as for the family members. Rachel (1975) asserts that active euthanasia may be illegal but it is more humane because it provides immediate relief from pain to the patient who might have had to suffer prolonged pain during passive euthanasia! He says that the differences ‘ may make active euthanasia, and not passive euthanasia, the morally preferable option’. Hence, allowing the patient to exercise his right to die in dignity is ethical. I seriously believe that for person who is in perpetual pain and where death is the only solution, euthanasia is the morally and legally correct alternative. Indeed, despite the expanding knowledge, the limitation of medical should also be accepted as a fact. The informed choices empower one to decide what is good for one or not, thereby making euthanasia morally right for terminally sick person who wishes to die in peace. (588)

Reference

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