

Medical ethics dax cowart



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

A body and a mind under duress reacts much differently than a body and mind in normal circumstances. On a primal level, I think the mind's main purpose is to protect the body from harm or to alleviate the pain once it is occurring. For that reason, a person who is in excruciating pain or has just undergone a traumatic life change is not mentally capable of making a rational decision about ending their life. Moreover, there is no rational decision one can make about ending one's life. Dax Cowart was in excruciating pain from the severe burns on his body.

In addition to that he also had the combined effect of trying to mentally prepare for a life as a disfigured human being. Due to his pain he was not able to fully comprehend or think rationally about what kinds of things his future might hold. Because of Dax's mental state due to his pain and his exposure to extreme changes in his life, I believe that, no, Dax Cowart should not have been allowed to refuse medical treatment and end his life at any point in the healing process. In this paper I will discuss three arguments for why this is so.

The first reason I will discuss as to why Dax should not have been allowed to refuse treatment is because if a person is suicidal then that person is not rational. In my observations, the primary goal of a human is to preserve life. Our body produces chemical reactions when we are in danger in order to assist in preserving life. An article at Health Science. com says it pretty clearly: “ Essentially, our nervous system not only keeps us informed about the world outside us and inside us, but it also allows us to react to it.

Every muscle we move, everything we physically feel, and every tissue in our body is controlled or monitored by our nervous system. If we sense we are in danger, our body naturally alters its chemistry in order to prepare us for a fight or flight emergency. ” (http://www.health-science.com/panic_and_anxiety_attacks_and_the_nervous_system.html) Our feelings and emotions grieve when another person’s life is taken.

Our minds and bodies are set up in every way to avoid pain, prevent illness, and adapt to trauma in order to live, therefore if a person is trying to end his/her life, or take the life of another person, we call that person mentally disturbed, depressed, even psychopathic. Back in the 70’s Dax underwent a psychiatric evaluation which found him competent. Because of the connection that is now known between how a person’s mental and chemical components change due to stress and trauma, I have much doubt that if he was given the same evaluation today that he would still be found rational and competent.

As a side point: Even if Dax was rational and wanted to end his life, it is one thing to take it upon himself to end it, but it is quite another to request this of another person, which Dax did at various points along his recovery process. Ethically and emotionally it is not a fair request to ask someone else to assist you in ending your life, nor is it reasonable to ask someone to refrain from helping you so that you will die. Because we as humans operate with the goal to preserve life, it is asking a very emotionally traumatic thing of another person to assist in something of this nature.

The second reason why I feel that it was justified to not allow Dax to refuse medical treatment is because after his treatment, Dax went on to overcome his depression and is now a happy and functioning member of society. I agree that he went through some tough times, and that he attempted suicide even after his wounds were healed, but clearly those were a result of depressive thoughts and actions.

He has since remedied this state of mind and is living a successful life as a lawyer. He is married and, as he stated in the text, “ I’m enjoying life now and I’m glad to be alive”. Munson p. 101). That statement, “ I’m enjoying life now and I’m glad to be alive”, proves that his mindset at the time of wanting to die was merely a temporary state of mind and not the way he thinks all of the time. The depression that he felt that lead to his attempted suicides and his pleas for doctors to end his life were things he had to work through by changing his mental view and by changing the negative thoughts which lead to negative feelings. I think it is very understandable that Dax would have those thoughts.

I think most people who are undergoing such a stressful, traumatic change in their life would have the same reaction. Plus the pain that he was feeling would be enough to send anyone psychologically over the edge. And since Dax was not in his right mind during this time, the farmer and the doctors and Dax’s mother were all justified in refusing to let Dax die. The third and final reason why I agree that Dax should not have been able to refuse treatment and have other people assist in his death is because Dax Cowart would have been treating himself and those he requested this of as merely a means.

According to Kant's philosophy, " we must always treat people (including ourselves) as ends and not as means only". (Munson p. 752). When we ignore another's free existence and impose our own will on them, we are treating that person as a means to get something we desire. (paraphrased from class notes). If Dax would have been allowed to refuse treatment, and if he would have insisted on making the farmer get a gun and shoot him, then he would have been imposing his own will on another person in order to gain something for himself.

Life is not always black and white. There are always grey areas and I feel that sometimes there are acceptable times for an assisted suicide. However, Dax was not one of those times. If a person is terminally ill, if they are not able to support life function on their own ex. They are on a ventilator, or in some other way being kept alive where they would die anyway, and at the same time have existed in a vegetative state for a prolonged period of time. Dax Cowart was not one of these exceptions.

He was a young man who's life was not a guaranteed loss. A loss in quality of life is not the same thing as a guaranteed loss of life. Impairments happen. If everyone ended their life at the mere possibility of an impaired quality of life than there would be a lot less people on earth today. For this reason, and because of the three reasons I mentioned in this paper, Dax coward should not have been allowed to refuse medical treatment at any point in his recovery.