

The right to die



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Problem The fear of death is powerful; however, the fear of not dying or of living a life full of pointless suffering is even more powerful. Because of this fear, there is a belief that one should be the master of their own fate. This belief then brings about the concept of euthanasia. Sanders and Chaloner define euthanasia as “ a deliberate intervention or omission with the express intention of hastening or ending an individual’s life, to relieve intractable pain or suffering” (2007, p). Euthanasia is associated with the act of mercifully ending the life of a suffering patient.

Those who are terminally ill should have the choice and the right to die with dignity. Elisabeth Kubler-Ross has identified that grief is handled in stages. The stages of grief are denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. Not everyone goes through each stage and the order may be different for each person. Although the stages are well established, will knowing the process and stages of death allow a more peaceful death?

Purpose The purpose of this study is to identify whether physician assisted suicide will decrease the anxieties of the terminally ill and allow a more peaceful death.

Common themes of autonomy will be identified in regards to end of life options. **Literature Review** Death and dying is an event that not one person can escape as it is inevitable. What is death? It has been defined as the stopping of the heartbeat and breathing. This definition is no longer true as CPR, defibrillation, and life support assist with sustaining life. With medical technology, death is defined as brain death. Brain death occurs when the electrical activity in the brain stops. Most people have their own idea of what constitutes a good death.

It is the healthcare professional's responsibility to educate and inform individuals concerning end of life issues and let them make an informative decision about their right to die (Cardozo, 2005). Euthanasia is a very sensitive topic and has become an increasing debate. In the debates and articles that have been published, the definition of euthanasia has not been forthcoming (Sanders & Chaloner, 2007). There are many types and definitions for euthanasia. Voluntary euthanasia is defined when an individual asks a physician to administer a drug or other type of agent which results in death