

The Right to Die

A difficult problem that is facing society is the legalization of euthanasia, another word for mercy killing. Euthanasia is a method of causing death painlessly to end suffering. People who are in a coma because of accidents and elderly people who are terminally ill because of incurable diseases are being kept alive by artificial means. They do not have a chance to recover, but American laws do not allow doctors to end their lives. However, in my opinion, euthanasia should be legal for several reasons.

The first and most important reason to support euthanasia is that these patients have no chance of recovery. They can never lead normal lives and must be kept alive by life-support machines such as respirators to help them breathe and feeding tubes to provide them with nutrition. They are clearly more dead than alive and will never be able to live a normal life. For example, after Samuel, an infant, had swallowed a balloon, he stopped breathing. The balloon was removed, but the lack of oxygen had caused brain damage and left him in a coma. Samuel was unable to breathe without the aid of a respirator, and there was no hope for recovery.

Another reason to support mercy killing is that medical costs are very high. Today, the cost of a hospital room can be as much as \$1,450 per day for basic care, which does not include the cost of specialized care or the use of special equipment. The high cost of medical care can cause financial problems for the family. For example, Charles Adkin's eighty-two-year-old wife lived in a nursing home in a coma for four years. Since there was no chance for her recovery, Mr. Adkins requested that the medical staff withhold treatment. However, his pleas were ignored. Soon after she died, Mr. Adkins was billed \$250,000 for his wife's medical care. The courts ordered him to pay the bill, which must have placed a terrible financial burden on him.

The final reason to support legalizing euthanasia is that the family suffers. The nurses and other hospital staff can give the terminally ill patient only minimum care. Thus, the family must spend time to care for the special needs of their loved one. For instance, Nancy Cruzan was kept alive on life-support machines for eight years. She would never recover from vegetative state. However, during those years, her loving, caring parents visited her regularly.

In the end, because terminally ill patients have no chance to recover and to live normal lives, they should be allowed to die with dignity. Therefore, the family should have the right to ask doctors to turn off the life-support machines or to stop further medical treatment. To prolong life artificially when there is no hope for the future is a tragedy both for the patients and for their loved ones.

*Excerpt from *Introduction to Academic Writing* by Alice Oshima and Ann Hogue