Euthanasia Essay, Research Paper

Euthanasia

The term Euthanasia has become well known throughout the country. The word is derived from ancient Greek eu thantos, meaning good death. Today, euthanasia is referred to as mercy killing or assisted suicide. There is much controversy over whether or not the practice is just. Euthanasia raises many religious, medical, and moral issues. Euthanasia can either be active or passive. Active euthanasia occurs when a physician or other medical personnel induces death. An overdose is administered to the patients in the form of insulin, barbiturates, or morphine, and then followed by an injection of curare. Passive euthanasia, on the other hand, is allowing the patient to die due to lack of treatment. This includes taking the patient off their support system, or respirator. Passive euthanasia also includes stopping the food supply intravenously to comatose patients (Compton s, 1). Certain forms of euthanasia have been legally accepted. In general, laws attempt to draw a line between passive euthanasia and active euthanasia. While laws commonly permit passive euthanasia, active euthanasia is typically prohibited.

In today s society there are many disagreements about the rights and wrongs of euthanasia. Although death is unavoidable for human beings, suffering before death is unbearable not only for terminal patients but for the family members and friends. Someday we will all die, although we do not know when or how. In my opinion, for arguments sake, suppose you were told you would die in one of two ways and had to choose between them. First, you could die quietly and without pain by lethal injection. Or secondly, you could choose to die of a disease that caused excruciating pain and reduced your body to a point where it was unrecognizable, while your family helplessly watched. Each dying patient should be free to choose euthanasia or reject it, simply as a matter of personal liberty. I am neither for it nor against it, but the government should not have the right to tell another what choice to make. If a dying patient wants euthanasia, that is a private matter. The life belongs to the patient, the patient should have the right to decide.

From a religious point of view, according to Fr. Frank Pavone, written in Brief Reflections on Euthanasia, states that we do not have a right to die. A right is a moral claim. We do not have a claim on death. Rather, death has a claim on us! We do not decide when life will end, anymore than we decide when it began. No matter how ill a patient is, we never have a right to put that person to death. Rather, we have a duty to care for and preserve life.(Pavone) Christians believe that since we are the property of God then we should wait until He is ready to receive us. Many churches and religious groups oppose euthanasia stating that the fifth commandment Thou Shalt Not Kill also extends to euthanasia.

Personal views regarding euthanasia are often influenced by their religious beliefs. With a controversial topic, such as euthanasia, there are strong opinions accentuated. Euthanasia is strongly affiliated to medical and ethical debates. Opponents and advocates of euthanasia have several significant points regarding their views on the practice. Humans have a natural inclination to continue life (Baird, 98). Opponents believe that euthanasia acts against nature. Like animals, humans fight for survival. It is our goal to protect ourselves from harm and do whatever possible to stay alive. When euthanasia is implicated, it goes against our concept for survival (Baird, 98-99). Those against the practice also believe that some might abuse euthanasia and use it for self-interest.

The cost to keep a person alive through means of modern technology can be very expensive. Families might, despite their love for the patient, consider that the money is being spent for what may be a hopeless cause (Baird, 97). Opponents argue the possibility of spontaneous remission. In many cases a patient recovers with no explanation. With euthanasia, these miraculous recoveries would not exist because there would be no expectation of them happening. If the patient is put to death then they have lost their right to recovery and life (Baird, 100). Another argument regarding abuse is the professional aspect of euthanasia. In the medical profession, doctors are committed to saving lives (Baird, 100). When a doctor intentionally and deliberately enables an individual to end their life, the doctor acts unethically. The doctor must keep in mind to preserve human life from conception until death.

From a psychological point of view, proponents feel that euthanasia is an admirable concept, however, the request for death from a patient should be seriously evaluated before administered. Advocates feel that it is a patients right to choose whether or not to die. The concern about following a patient s request relies on their psychological state. It must be determined whether the patient is feeling depressed and that is why they want to die, or if it is to relieve the pain. Before euthanasia is implemented the question must be asked if it is in the patients best interest (Battin, 120). This is another argument in favor of strict controls to confirm that a patient requesting aid in dying is of sound mind .

People who become diagnosed with terminal diseases will also want to end their own life, even though they have much more of a life to live. Basically, legislators are afraid that if the practice of euthanasia was made legal, it may result in an epidemic of mass suicide. The medical profession has generally been caught in the middle of controversies over euthanasia. Government and religious groups as well as members of the medical field all agree that doctors are not necessarily required to use extraordinary means to prolong the life of the terminal ill and dying. However, this is ultimately left up to the family of the patient. So, as a result of lack of money and/or outrageous medical procedures needed, the patients would be allowed to die. Modern technological advances, such as respirators and kidney machines have made it possible to sustain a patient s life for long periods of time even when they are permanently unconscious and suffering form severe brain damage. Proponents of euthanasia agree that prolonging life in this manner may cause great suffering to the patient and their family. The National Conference of Commissioners on Uniform State Laws in 1985 completed the Uniform Rights of the Terminally Ill Act. This act entitles patients the choice to refuse life support (Baird, 167-171).

In conclusion, these ideas are hard to accept, but deserve consideration. Euthanasia is a very controversial topic that raises many religious, medical and ethical issues. View points of opponents and advocates have been debated for many years. There are several quality arguments presented by both those for and against the practice, which I have argued in this paper. The idea of deliberately killing someone goes against the very core of our morality. I am not suggesting that the value of life be taken lightly, nonetheless, I believe that in the most tragic cases, euthanasia should be permissible, only depending on the situation of the patient.

Bibliography

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