Euthanasia Is Ethical Essay, Research Paper

Euthanasia is defined in Webster?s Dictionary as ?the act or practice of killing or permitting the death of hopelessly sick or injured individuals in a relatively painless way for reason of mercy (Webster?s Dictionary 401). The Hemlock Society defines it as ?justifiable suicide, that is rational and planned self-deliverance?. The word euthanasia comes from the Greek- eu, which means good and thanatos death. No matter what your definition, euthanasia is ethical, and physicians should be allowed to assist in it legally (Derek Humphry, 18).

People usually think of ethical as meaning ?conforming to accepted professional standards of conduct? (Webster?s Dictionary 398); however, is it ethical to force a person with a terminal illness to suffer when there is no need? No, it is not. But, euthanasia is ethical. Suicide can be justified ethically when and if a terminal illness is causing unbearable suffering and is at an advanced stage. It can also be justified ethically if a horrible physical handicap is so restricting, that even after due consideration and training, it remains an intolerable existence (Wesley J. Smith 55). But, some fine print on the subject does exist. ?In order to make the choice ethical you must be a mature adult?, says Derek Humphry, author of 1991 best seller, Final Exit (17). People must consider the decision very wisely. This can not be a hasty act. And last, they should attempt medical treatment and care before a decision is made. If we consider the meaning of ethical to coexist with religion, Christianity, for example, euthanasia is perfectly ethical. God is loving and understanding. God does not want you to suffer, he wants you to be happy and pain free (Humphry 19).

Some people believe euthanasia is unethical. They say life is valuable no matter what your physical, emotional, or mental state. Well, if they were spending thousands of dollars a day to keep a loved one alive when there is no chance of them ever coming ?back to life,? is that ethical? No. They say you should choose to stop treatment, rather than to terminate life (Samira Beckwith 9). The outcome may be the same in the long run yes, but is that really ethical? If treatment is stopped, the person would suffer even longer, and without treatment the pain would surely be even more unbearable. How could it be more ethical to let someone die suffering rather than dying comfortably and painlessly with the assistance of a physician? It?s not (Ronald Otremba 22).

According to opinion polls, most Americans want doctors to help terminally ill patients end their suffering by termination. The mental and physical aspects of suffering always go together. When a patient is in that much physical pain, the mental suffering will begin to set in (Kevin P. Glynn 8). It is inhuman for a doctor to refuse such a plea for help. With a patient in agony wouldn?t it be better to allow doctors to help patients legally rather than killing patients behind closed doors. This can not only be dangerous, but it puts the doctors at legal risk. Euthanasia should only be a last resort when all other treatment has failed. But why put these doctors at risk when they only want the best for their patients. They only want to help and make sure the patient knows they can always count on and trust in their physician. This is why it must be legal and ethically accepted in the United States for physicians to assist in euthanasia.

Lastly, euthanasia should be legalized so all terminally ill people can benefit from it if they so choose. John A. Pridonoff, executive director of the Hemlock Society, shows how ?legal safeguards can prevent euthanasia from harming society,? in an article published in Insight on the News (72). In a percent Harris Poll, seventy percent of the public favored legalizing physician assisted euthanasia. The first safeguard he writes about is that physician-assisted euthanasia be totally voluntary. Which means, the request can only be made by the individual who must be a competent adult (75). This puts the patient in control, not the physician or the family. Second, we must restrict to whom this is available to. It should and would only be available to a terminally ill competent adult. Terminally ill would be defined as a patient will produce death within six months as pronounced by a medical professional (76). And last the patient would be informed of alternative treatments with ample time left to reconsider their decision. With these safeguards, we can allow physician assisted euthanasia to become legalized in our country.

People who disagree with legalizing euthanasia say that legalizing euthanasia would harm society. Charles Dougherty says that allowing euthanasia to be legalized would put a lower value on human life (66). When in fact, only the opposite is true. It would make life more valuable. He says the easiest choice would be killing (66). Not so, with John Pridonoff?s ideas in place this would protect the patient and none of Dougherty?s fears would come true. Euthanasia is not curing a disease by killing the patient as he believes. It allows the patient to die in peace with no suffering. Steve Forbes calls euthanasia barbaric (31). Isn?t it far more barbaric to force someone to suffer rather than helping them to end their misery?

Euthanasia is ethical, and physicians should be allowed to assist in it legally. My great-grandfather was terminally ill with cancer. He couldn?t eat or sleep, he just laid there, constantly in pain. There was nothing they could do as far as cancer treatment, because his body was too old and weak. So, he suffered for almost 2 months, while we all watched him suffer more and more everyday as he lay there dying. He stated many times how he just wanted to die and didn?t want to live anymore. But, we (society) forced him to suffer. This is something that should have never happened and should never happen again.