Euthanasia: Is It Right Or Wro Essay, Research Paper

Euthanasia: Is it Right or Wrong

The idea of euthanasia has divided the country, some believe it is killing for mercy, others just killing. Many countries are now beginning to legalize euthanasia. According to a study done by Meinrad Schaer, MD, in Sweden in 1996 an 211 people applied for assisted suicide, and 119 were accepted (2). However, in the United States legalization of assisted suicide has been a huge controversy. As of right now, many states have euthanasia and anti-euthanasia laws on the books or being debated in state Senates. Many small political groups, including mostly Libertarians and a minority of liberal Democrats, are preaching to the legislation that anti-euthanasia laws violate our rights under the equal protection laws of the 14th Amendment. They say our right to privacy is illegally being encroached upon. A large number of people believe that assisted suicide is not only suicide, but also murder. By not letting themselves be saved, terminally ill people are giving up the chance for life. Others believe that individuals have the right to choose their own destiny.

Various political groups are preaching out against euthanasia. They believe that society has the ethical duty to try and save its terminally ill people. Their point of view is that a doctor should try to save terminally ill patients, not to help destroy them. By helping someone commit suicide, a doctor is putting a price on a human life. No one should have the right to do that.

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With new medical advances terminally ill patients are able to have a prolonged life. If individuals want to die because their pain is to excruciating, then they are not getting the right amount of care from their current physician. They need a second opinion to find better pain medicines. Modern medicine is now able to get rid of almost all pain a patient is feeling. New medical products are coming out on the market that can relieve severe pain without the narcotic side effects, and with little or no brain cell damage.

One conflict that is greatly debated is the state of mind of terminally ill patients when they decide they want to go through with assisted suicide. They have become so sick that they are unable to make serious decisions. Also patients have become extremely depressed and want to have someone help them die. They are in such denial that they don t realize that depression is treatable and so might be their disease.

A large number of people are convinced that if euthanasia were to become legal nationwide that it would open the door to the mercy killing plea in court. According to an article written by Daniel C. Macguire in the Atlantic Monthly:

Resorting to reasons of insanity for acquittal in mercy killing cases is a common tactic. This tactic would seem to constitute a commentary on the state of the law. What is happening in these instances is that there is a flight to psychiatry when there is no help from the law. Such cases are not rare. Carol Paight, a Connecticut college girl who had been indicted for second-degree murder for killing her hospitalized father who was dying of cancer, was acquitted by reasons of temporary insanity at the time of the

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commission of the act. And in Michigan, Eugene Braunsdorf won the same merciful judgement after killing his crippled adult daughter, who was spastic, mute, and had required hospitalization all her life. (3)

Others believe in a completely different way of thinking, by accepting those who wish to take their own lives in a peaceful manner. They say that people have the right to choose because their life is their own. If someone is suffering and there is no chance to live, then they should be able to die a dignified death. It is not wrong to help to end the life of a loved one, because you are ending the suffering that modern medicine could not.

The liberal politicians have many reasons why euthanasia should be legal. There are two main reasons for the legalization of euthanasia that they expound. The first is that of a living will. If the person who is terminally ill wrote a will when they were healthy and in a sound state of mind, stating that if they are terminally ill, than they wish to die in a way that helps them not to suffer anymore. The second is that of the equal protection law, which states, every natural person has the right to be let alone and free from governmental intrusion into their private life. When they speak for or against, a bill or law, these are the main points they exercise in great detail.

People most certainly have the right to assisted suicide, but only if that person is terminally ill. To continue to let laws be passed against euthanasia is to violate each American s constitutional rights. This may open the door to more laws that can be passed that breach our constitutional rights and not just in the 14th Amendment.

According to Collier s Encyclopedia Volume 9 Euthanasia is the intentional termination of life by another at the request of the person who dies (497). This is a good

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point made by a non-bias definition. This definition means that it is the person s choice to die and not the decision made by others. The government has no right to decide whether a person s life is his or her own. If a person has written a legal will on what would happen if they became terminally ill, then it is also a right that it is carried out.

It is true that new medical advances can prolong life, but not always prolong the quality of the life. While on many new treatments the pain may be gone, but after a while on these medications many organs in your body can deteriorate. The new medicines can harm the blood system in your body i.e. liver, kidneys, and heart. This gives the patient a severe lack of energy and low blood pressure. Terminally ill people should have the choice to die a dignified death, rather than a painful one.

The United States government has, until now, left it up to many individual states to decide how the euthanasia laws would be dealt with. As of right now, Oregon is the only state that allows closely monitored physician assisted suicide to be legal. In this law doctors will not be imprisoned or lose their medical license because they prescribed lethal amounts of medicine to terminally ill patients. However, the Federal Government has started to get more involved in the issue, due to pressure from certain political groups. In October of 2000, then Attorney General Janet Reno overturned the position taken by the head of one of her own agencies, the Drug Enforcement Administration, which had said that doctors who prescribe drugs under Oregon’s law could face severe penalties. Reno concluded that the federal law does not authorize the prosecution of a physician who complies with the Oregon law.

As of December 1998, 35 states have statutes that make assisted suicide illegal. In 1996 the Ohio Supreme Court said that assisted suicide is not illegal, but that they

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would not legalize physician assisted suicide. While many states are now beginning to see more euthanasia bills presented, over 1,000 nationwide have been turned down.

While this debate continues many people are turning to euthanasia as a form of pain relief. This radical idea of euthanasia is dividing the country. One may wonder, Is it killing for mercy, or just killing.