

## Euthanasia: Are we ready for it, or is it too late?

Basant Pant<sup>1</sup> 

<sup>1</sup>Department of Neurosurgery, Annapurna Neurological Institute & Allied Sciences, Maitighar, Kathmandu, Nepal

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*“Why should I fear death? If I am, then death is not. If death is, then I am not. Why should I fear that which can only exist when I do not?” – Epicurus*

**E**uthanasia, also known as assisted suicide, is the act of intentionally ending the life of a person suffering from a terminal illness or incurable condition. The word “euthanasia” comes from the Greek words “eu,” meaning “good,” and “thanatos,” meaning “death.”<sup>1</sup> Passive euthanasia entails the withholding treatment necessary for the continuance of life. Active euthanasia entails the use of lethal substances or forces (such as administering a lethal injection), and is more controversial. Euthanasia is a highly sensitive issue under scrutiny from medical, ethical, religious, cultural and socio-economic viewpoints.

The history of euthanasia dates back to ancient Greece and Rome, where it was accepted as a humane way to end the suffering of the terminally ill. However, the Christian church’s opposition to the practice led to it being banned in the Middle Ages. In the 19th century, the rise of the modern hospice movement brought renewed interest in euthanasia as a way to alleviate suffering at the end of life.<sup>2</sup> In the 20th century, euthanasia became a controversial issue, with some advocating for its legalization as a compassionate way to end suffering, while others argued that it was morally wrong and could be abused. In the United States, Oregon became the first state to legalize physician-assisted suicide in 1997, followed by Washington, Vermont, California, Colorado, Hawaii, and

New Jersey.<sup>3</sup> However, the legality of euthanasia varies widely around the world, with some countries, such as the Netherlands and Belgium, legalizing it, while others, such as the United States, have only legalized it in some states.<sup>4</sup>

Currently, the debate over euthanasia continues, with some arguing that it should be a legal option for those suffering from terminal illnesses or incurable conditions, while others argue that it goes against the sanctity of life and could lead to abuse. Supporters of euthanasia argue that it is a compassionate way to end suffering and that individuals should have the right to make decisions about their own end-of-life care. Opponents argue that it is morally wrong and that there are other ways to alleviate suffering, such as palliative care. In recent years in United Kingdom, 70% of the doctors believed assistant dying in defined circumstances and should be legal.<sup>5</sup> Overall, the issue of euthanasia is a complex and emotional one, with valid arguments on both sides. It is important to consider the perspectives and experiences of those who are suffering, as well as the potential consequences of legalizing or banning these practice. While these debate over euthanasia continues, it is clear that the goal is to alleviate suffering and provide dignity at the end of life. Euthanasia, also known as assisted suicide, is a highly controversial issue, with valid arguments on both sides. Here are some of the pros and cons of euthanasia:

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### Address for correspondence:

Prof. Dr. Basant Pant

Chief and Head of Department, Department of Neurosurgery, Annapurna Neurological Institute & Allied Sciences, Maitighar, Kathmandu, Nepal

E-mail: [bpant@ahc.com.np](mailto:bpant@ahc.com.np)

Phone number : +9779851100445

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### Pros

**Relief of suffering:** One of the main arguments in favor of euthanasia is that it can alleviate the suffering of those who are terminally ill or have incurable conditions. Euthanasia can provide a peaceful and painless death for those who are experiencing intense physical or emotional pain.

**Respect for autonomy:** Supporters of euthanasia argue that individuals should have the right to make decisions about their own end-of-life care. They argue that it is a basic human right to have control over one’s own body and to be able to end suffering when it becomes unbearable.

**Cost-effective:** Euthanasia can be less expensive than prolonging the life of a terminally ill person through medical treatment.

Family members can have closure: Euthanasia can provide closure for family members of the terminally ill person, allowing them to say goodbye and grieve in peace.

### Cons

Violation of the sanctity of life: Opponents of euthanasia argue that it goes against the basic principle that all human life is sacred. They believe that life should be protected and preserved at all costs.

Risk of abuse: Opponents argue that legalizing euthanasia could lead to abuse, with vulnerable individuals being pressured into ending their lives for the convenience of others.

Palliative care: Opponents argue that there are other ways to alleviate suffering, such as palliative care, which focuses on improving the quality of life for the terminally ill through pain management and emotional support.

Risk of slippery slope: Opponents argue that once euthanasia is legalized, it could lead to a slippery slope where it is gradually expanded to include non-terminal illnesses, leading to a devaluation of human life.

Lack of oversight: Opponents of euthanasia argue that there is a lack of oversight and regulation of the practice, leading to potential mistakes and abuses.

### Conclusion

The issue of euthanasia is a complex and emotional one, with valid arguments on both sides. It is important to consider the perspectives and experiences of those

who are suffering, as well as the potential consequences of legalizing or banning the practice. Furthermore public opinion may also needs to be further accounted for in policymaking and discourses regarding patient autonomy and dignity of care.

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