

VII Sharps – DEBATE #2: PHYSICIAN ASSISTED SUICIDE - NEGATIVE

VII Sharps – Debate #2: Physician Assisted Suicide – Negative

Sara Levy

Long Island University

INTRO

Good evening everyone, it's a pleasure to present to you once again. This evening the VII sharps are debating **against** physician assisted suicide. Due to this highly controversial topic, it is essential that we clarify what this debate is about before commencing the main body of our discussion. The American Medical Association gives the following definition: "Physician-assisted suicide occurs when a physician facilitates a patient's death by providing the necessary means and/or information to enable the patient to perform the life-ending act."

Therefore, please bear in mind that we are **NOT** arguing that terminally ill patients should remain in pain and we are **NOT** arguing against social diversity or patient autonomy. We **ARE** debating that the act of physician assisted suicide is an intrinsic violation of the Hippocratic Oath and the American Medical Association code of ethics. Opinion 2.211 in the code of ethics on the American Medical Association website states, "Physician-assisted suicide is fundamentally incompatible with the physician's role as healer." It is imperative that you bear this definition and opinion in mind when as we approach the topic at hand.

Also bear in mind that there is a general sentiment amongst the public which fuels the debate on PAS. This emotion has enabled legislation, which was passed by **non-health professionals** in the states of Oregon, Washington, Virginia, and Montana, and that emotion is fear. In the article "Why Involve Physicians in Assisted Suicide?" John Jay Paris explains, that while patients fear death, there is a more **powerful and pervasive** fear, and I quote, "[the fear of] being forced to endure destructive pain, or to live out a life of unrelieved, pointless suffering. However, the unrestrained freedom to end one's life or to have it ended by a physician ought not to be the only response to that fear; nor is such a response without grave social implications."

CONCLUSION

So, let's review the material covered:

1. PAS is a blatant violation of the Hippocratic Oath and the American Medical Association code of ethics and a violation of human rights.
2. In the current body of medical ethics accepted in America assisted suicide is an **active** **voluntary** involvement in the patient's death and is therefore unethical. It is also still illegal in 48 states.
3. While controversial, religious objections to PAS cannot be ignored
4. Also, consider the potential abuses in order to contain medical costs and reduce the burden of care on families.
5. Furthermore, Due to the fallibility of medical diagnosing, it is possible that individuals will commit suicide based on an incorrect medical diagnosis and prognosis for the future.
6. Lastly, requests for death have been linked to poor healthcare, unrecognized psychological needs, and poor pain management, which can be managed through other means of care, particularly palliative care, instead of death.

Therefore in conclusion, taking these facts into consideration we ask you, why must physicians be involved in a practice that has been against medical ethical standards that have been in existence for millennia? Please stop and ask yourself, why is physician assisted suicide an appropriate response to poorly managed pain and suffering? In this day and age of advanced medical technology and a patient centered care approach that addresses a patient's physical, psychological, and spiritual needs, why is it that we can find no solution other than physician assisted suicide?

Thank you for your consideration and have a good evening.

Question - Autonomy

It seems that a great deal of emphasis regarding physician assisted suicide is put on the patient having the **autonomy** to end their life, on their terms, at a time of their choosing. However, putting aside the intrinsic injustice and double standard regarding who may exercise that autonomy, numerous patients and physicians believe that G-d not man should choose the time and manner of death and therefore believe that PAS is wrong based on their religious principles. My question is how can you reconcile PAS in terms of religion?