Euthanasia
A moral issue

http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-22191059

http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-22198464
KEY WORDS ....

- Euthanasia
- Passive
- Active
- Voluntary
- Involuntary
- Non voluntary
- Quality of Life
- Sanctity of Life
- Agape
- Hospice
- Dignity
What is euthanasia?

“Euthanasia” literally means “a gentle, easy death.”

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JkQKSS_g4LM
Who might want to have euthanasia?
What is euthanasia?

In Britain, as in many other countries, euthanasia is illegal. A doctor who deliberately ends someone’s life can be charged with manslaughter or murder.
What is the role of a doctor?
The role of a doctor

- The job of a doctor is to heal.
- The **Hippocratic oath** that a doctor must take entails the requirement that they do not willing harm another person. “I will not prescribe a deadly drug to please someone, nor give advice that may cause his death.”
  
  Hippocrates

- But many people argue a doctors job is to **preserve the quality of a persons life** by healing.
- If this is the case surely if a person feels they have **no quality of life** a doctor should preserve that by **helping them to die?**
Think of humans as having THREE dimensions ...
KEY IDEA

QUALITY OF LIFE

Is Life worth living??????

MENTALLY ~ Have you given up?

PHYSICALLY ~ Are you in pain?

SPIRITUALLY ~ Are you at Peace with yourself and God?

Is there someone worse off than YOU? Can good come out of your suffering? Test of Faith? Often you have no idea what the patient may be thinking or feeling.... So can you make judgements on their behalf?
What is euthanasia?

However, there have been recent cases where doctors have been acquitted of such charges. In these cases the court has decided that the person’s quality of life was at such a low level that it was right to end that life.
What is euthanasia?

Some people believe that what is important is not just the fact that a person has life but that the life has quality. They believe that if a person’s quality of life is very low, then that person, or somebody representing them should be allowed to make the decision that their life should be ended.

The ending of a life in a situation which relieves suffering is called euthanasia aka mercy killing.
Types of euthanasia-

1. **Voluntary Euthanasia.**
   
   This is where a person chooses (or volunteers) to end their own life in a dignified way. They ask for help to end their life as they are unable to commit suicide themselves, this is also called assisted suicide.
2. Non voluntary Euthanasia.

This is where a decision is made that a person should die *without the consent of that person*. The person may be in a coma or only a few hours old.

Eg- Tony Bland.
Tony Bland

- Tony bland was the victim of the 1989 Hillsborough disaster in which many football fans were crushed to death.
- He survived but was left in a persistent vegetative state (PVS) in which it was thought he would never recover.
- In this state the body can breathe and main organs function properly.
- In Bland’s case he could open his eyes but did not respond to anything around him.
Tony Bland

- He could not feed but could digest food so needed to have food and water provided through a feeding tube.
- There was no cure for Tony’s condition but he was not dying.
- The question, which eventually ended up in court, was whether or not it was right to remove artificial feeding and lead to death through starvation and dehydration.
- This seems like a painful and cruel way if he was able to sense the pain although it was thought he would not.
Involuntary euthanasia

- The 2005 Mental Capacity Act makes it clear that assisted food and fluids is a medical treatment which can be withdrawn.
- The ethical challenge here is that there are instances where doctors are convinced that a person will never wake up from a coma, or has no capacity for higher life function, and yet can be sustained indefinitely.
- Does it show more or less respect for the value of the human person to withdraw life-sustaining measures?
Involuntary euthanasia

- Another area of controversy surrounds the care of severely disabled babies.
- As medical advances improve, it is possible to keep alive more and more severely physically disabled babies.
- Some argue that allowing a disabled baby to live is to disable a family.
- In November 2006 the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists urged health professionals to consider euthanasia for seriously disabled babies to spare the emotional burden of families bringing up the sickest of children.
but

• Others are concerned that the precedent of actively killing a baby or withdrawing treatment to bring about death much sooner cultivates a culture in which all disabled people are considered to be of less value.

• Would disabled people lose their rights in a society where disabled babies are euthanized?
The death of Tony Bland is an example of ‘passive euthanasia’, or ‘letting die’, which is often held up as morally better than active euthanasia. Is it better?

James Rachels argues that if you (passively) ‘let someone die’ by watching them drown, then your action is morally as bad as actively drowning that person.
3. **Involuntary Euthanasia.**

This happened in Nazi Germany ~ disabled and sick people were killed without consultation.

Nazi eugenics were Nazi Germany's racially-based social policies that placed the improvement of the Aryan race. Those humans were targeted that they identified as "life unworthy of life" (German: Lebensunwertes Leben), including but not limited to the criminal, degenerate, dissident, feeble-minded, homosexual, idle, insane and the weak, for elimination from the chain of heredity. More than 400,000 people were sterilized against their will, while **70,000 were killed under Action T4, a "euthanasia" program**
In October of 1939 amid the turmoil of the outbreak of war Hitler ordered widespread "mercy killing" of the sick and disabled.

Code named "Aktion T 4," the Nazi euthanasia program to eliminate "life unworthy of life" at first focused on new-borns and very young children. Midwives and doctors were required to register children up to age three who showed symptoms of

- mental retardation,
- physical deformity,
- or other symptoms included on a questionnaire from the Reich Health Ministry.
Involuntary Euthanasia

- Patients had to be reported if they suffered from schizophrenia, epilepsy, senile disorders, therapy resistant paralysis and syphilitic diseases, retardation, encephalitis, Huntington's chorea and other neurological conditions, also those who had been continuously in institutions for at least 5 years, or were criminally insane, or did not possess German citizenship or were not of German or related blood, including Jews, Negroes, and Gypsies.
Involuntary Euthanasia
Types of euthanasia-

4. Active Euthanasia.

This is when action is taken to bring life to an end; for example a lethal dose of drugs might be given. This is against the law.
Types of euthanasia-

5. Passive Euthanasia.

This is where a person is not helped to die, but where their life is not artificially prolonged using any drugs or technology. For example, a person who is terminally ill may have their pain controlled and the symptoms of their illness carefully monitored, but no effort made to extend their life beyond its “natural” life span. Such people may go to a hospice to end their lives.
Recap ... what are the 5 types of euthanasia?

V  Voluntary Euthanasia.
N  Non voluntary Euthanasia
I  Involuntary Euthanasia.
A  Active Euthanasia.
P  Passive Euthanasia.
Voluntary Euthanasia

Euthanasia is performed because the patient has asked for it. e.g. a cancer patient who asks for a drug to quicken their death.

Involuntary Euthanasia

Doctors give the patient pain killing drugs knowing that the drug will also kill the patient.

Passive Euthanasia

Doctors give a painkilling drug but do nothing to save the patient.

Active Euthanasia

Euthanasia has to be performed because a person has a certain illness or has reached a certain age. (NOT LEGAL)

Non voluntary Euthanasia

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Euthanasia is performed without the dying person being told. e.g. a coma patient.

Doctors give a painkilling drug but do nothing to save the patient.

Doctors give the patient pain killing drugs knowing that the drug will also kill the patient.

Euthanasia has to be performed because a person has a certain illness or has reached a certain age. (NOT LEGAL)
More on voluntary euthanasia-

- This is legal in some countries (for example Holland), but certain conditions have to be met before it is permitted. These conditions are to ensure that the euthanasia is voluntary and the person in question is not being coerced into taking the decision, and that the person is diagnosed as being beyond hope of recovery by two separate physicians.
THE UK LAW

- **ACTIVE EUTHANASIA**: anything that involves the **administering** of a treatment or drug in order to shorten or end a person’s life is illegal. This is true even if they have given their consent to the death.

- **PASSIVE EUTHANASIA**: **withdrawing** treatment from a person in order to bring about their death is legal and widely practised in Britain.
British law and murder

- **Murder**, is defined as the **unlawful killing** of another **human being with intent** (or malice aforethought).

- To murder somebody you must **intend to kill** them.

- **Euthanasia** is the intentional killing of a person.

- It is clearly murder under the current definition.

- In order to legalise it we would have to define euthanasia so that it was considered legal killing, along with war.
Cases …

Annie Lindsell – was diagnosed with Motor Neurone Disease in 1992. She was worried she would die in pain. She requested the High Court to allow a doctor to administer her with diamorphine, without fear of prosecution, even if it might shorten her life.

Annie Lindsell – withdrew her the case in Oct 1997 after she established that Drs could legally administer life shortening drugs for the relief of mental; as well as physical distress. She was assured that her Dr would not allow her to suffer unnecessarily and a treatment plan was agreed. She died of Motor Neurone disease in December 1997

Dianne Pretty – wanted the courts to allow her husband to help her commit suicide because she feared the choking and asphyxia often caused by Motor Neurone Disease.

This went to the ECHR and was declined because the right to die was not part of her right to life. She died without any assistance in May 2002.
More on voluntary euthanasia-

- A pressure group called “Dignity in Dying” actively campaigns for the **legalization** of voluntary euthanasia in the UK.
L.O To know and understand the arguments for voluntary euthanasia.

KEY WORDS
MERCIFUL
AUTONOMY
PALLIATIVE
CARE

KEY PHILOSOPHERS
Gregory E. Pence
Thomas More
JS. Mill
1. Euthanasia is not murder
2. Euthanasia is merciful
3. Euthanasia gives people autonomy
4. Jack Kevorkian
5. Euthanasia goes on anyway
Why would someone want euthanasia?
There may be situations where people are in terrible pain or have such a profound sense of indignity because of their mental deterioration that they wish while they still have the chance to express a choice, to bring about death more quickly.

There are several arguments in favour of legal voluntary euthanasia.
For – voluntary euthanasia is not murder

- In his article “why physicians should aid the dying” Gregory E. Pence argues that killing humans who don't want to live is not wrong.

- It isn't wrong to help the dying to die, because they are actually dying.

- You are simply speeding up the process. This is therefore, not murder.
For – voluntary euthanasia is merciful

- Voluntary euthanasia shows mercy for those suffering with intolerable pain from an incurable disease.

- The English humanist Thomas More argued in his famous 1516 book *Utopia* that when a patient suffers a ‘torturing and lingering pain, so that there is no hope, either of recovery or ease, (they may) choose rather to die, since they cannot live but in much misery’.

- Voluntary euthanasia is a merciful opportunity to end needless suffering – one which we offer to animals and should offer to humans as well.
For – voluntary euthanasia gives people autonomy

- Mill argues that if it doesn’t affect someone else’s, individuals should have full autonomy. (complete freedom)

- “The only part of the conduct of any one, for which [a citizen] is amenable to society, is that which concerns others. In the part which merely concerns himself, his independence is, of right, absolute. Over himself, over his body and mind, the individual is sovereign”

- We expect to have control over our bodies in matters of life, and it should be the same in matters of death.
For – voluntary euthanasia gives people autonomy

○ The VES (voluntary euthanasia society) argues that every human being deserves respect and has the right to choose his or her own destiny, including how he or she lives and dies.

○ Controversial American doctor Jack Kevorkian has said ‘in my view the highest principle in medical ethics – in any kind of ethics – is personal autonomy, self-determination. What counts is what the patient wants and judges to be a benefit or a value in his or her own life. That’s primary’
Jack Kevorkian

Kevorkian aka 'Dr Death' because he photographed the eyes of dying patients. Later in his career (starting in 1987) he advertised his services as a physician offering 'death counselling'. When terminally ill patients learned that he was helping people to die, more and more people came to him. Despite several failed court cases, Kevorkian helped over 130 people to die. Kevorkian believed that helping people was not enough, and actually killed Thomas Youk, filmed himself doing so and receiving consent by the man. He was sentenced to 10-25 years in prison.
On the November 22, 1998, broadcast of CBS News' 60 Minutes, Kevorkian allowed the airing of a videotape he made on September 17, 1998, which depicted the voluntary euthanasia of Thomas Youk, 52, who was in the final stages of Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis. After Youk provided his fully informed consent (a sometimes complex legal determination made in this case by editorial consensus) on September 17, 1998, Kevorkian himself administered Thomas Youk a lethal injection. This was highly significant, as all of his earlier clients had reportedly completed the process themselves. During the videotape, Kevorkian dared the authorities to try to convict him or stop him from carrying out mercy killings. Youk's family described the lethal injection as humane, not murder.

On March 26, 1999, Kevorkian was charged with second-degree murder and the delivery of a controlled substance (administering the lethal injection to Thomas Youk).[9] Because Kevorkian's license to practice medicine had been revoked eight years previously, he was not legally allowed to possess the controlled substance. As homicide law is relatively fixed and routine, this trial was markedly different from earlier ones that involved an area of law in flux (assisted suicide). Kevorkian discharged his attorneys and proceeded through the trial representing himself, a decision he later regretted.[2] The judge ordered a criminal defense attorney to remain available at trial as standby counsel for information and advice. Inexperienced in law but persisting in his efforts to represent himself, Kevorkian encountered great difficulty in presenting his evidence and arguments. He was not able to call any witnesses to the stand as the judge did not deem the testimony of any of his witnesses relevant.[33]

After a two day trial, the Michigan jury found Kevorkian guilty of second-degree homicide.[2] Judge Jessica Cooper sentenced Kevorkian to serve 10–25 years in prison and told him:

"This is a court of law and you said you invited yourself here to take a final stand. But this trial was not an opportunity for a referendum. The law prohibiting euthanasia was specifically reviewed and clarified by the Michigan Supreme Court several years ago in a decision involving your very own cases, sir. So the charge here should come as no surprise to you. You invited yourself to the wrong forum. Well, we are a nation of laws, and we are a nation that tolerates differences of opinion because we have a civilized and a nonviolent way of resolving our conflicts that weighs the law and adheres to the law. We have the means and the methods to protest the laws with which we disagree. You can criticize the law, you can write or lecture about the law, you can speak to the media or petition the voters."

Kevorkian was sent to a prison in Coldwater, Michigan to serve his sentence. After his conviction (and subsequent losses on appeal) Kevorkian was denied parole repeatedly until 2007. In an MSNBC interview aired on September 29, 2005, Kevorkian said that if he were granted parole, he would not resume directly helping people die and would restrict himself to campaigning to have the law changed. On December 22, 2005, Kevorkian was denied parole by a board on the count of 7–2 recommending not to give parole.

Reportedly terminally ill with Hepatitis C, which he contracted while doing research on blood transfusions, Kevorkian was expected to die within a year in May 2006. After applying for a pardon, parole, or commutation by the parole board and Governor Jennifer Granholm, he was paroled for good behavior on June 1, 2007. He had spent eight years and two and a half months in prison.

Kevorkian was on parole for two years, under the conditions that he not help anyone else die, or provide care for anyone older than 62 or disabled] Kevorkian said he would abstain from assisting any more terminal patients with death, and his role in the matter would strictly be to persuade states to change their laws on assisted suicide. He was also forbidden by the rules of his parole from commenting about assisted suicide. Died June 2011.
For – voluntary euthanasia gives people autonomy

- Advocates of voluntary euthanasia argue that it should be an option for a competent adult, who is able and willing to make such a decision.

- They argue that it should be on offer as one option among many, along with the kind of **palliative care** offered by hospitals and hospices.

- **Free choice should be given to everyone!**

**Palliative care:** the care of patients with a terminal illness, not with the intent of trying to cure them, but to relieve their symptoms.
For euthanasia goes on anyway

- In 1994 the British Medical Journal published a survey that showed some doctors already help patients to die.

- Doctors can legally give pain relieving treatment in doses that will bring about people’s deaths more quickly and, in certain circumstances, such as in the case of the brain dead or comatose, they may also withdraw or withhold treatment even though a person will die if they do so.
For –euthanasia goes on anyway

- They cannot however, help someone to die at that person's request.
- The VES holds that it would be more honest and much safer if voluntary euthanasia was legal and regulated.
- They argue that there is no ethical difference between withdrawing treatment and delivery a lethal injection.
For – voluntary euthanasia maintains the quality of life

- Human beings should be able to maintain their dignity up until the ends of their lives.
- This is not simply a matter of pain, but of self-respect.
- If someone’s standard of living is such that they no longer want to live, then they should be able to end their life and, if necessary, be assisted in doing so.
- What is more, the quality of life worth living is one that only they can define.
- Having control over their life is a way of enhancing their human dignity.
review

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