

*Assisted Suicide
and You:
6 Points You
May Not Have
Considered*

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1. The legalisation of euthanasia would radically alter society. The

prohibition on killing one another is the cornerstone of law and human relationships, emphasising our basic equality, one of the essential foundations of democracy. In a world of intense individualism, where shared values are disappearing, to take away this prohibition is especially dangerous;

2. It is very difficult to control the practise of legalised euthanasia. As the experience in the Netherlands shows, restrictions and safety measures are often not respected, and the circumstances in which euthanasia is allowed continue to expand. In this way, since 2006, infanticide is practised legally in the Netherlands for children up to 12 years of age, upon the request of their parents;

3. Today, untreatable pain is a much less common situation. If such cases arise, “palliative sedation” (induced sleep) may be used. Better pain management training for healthcare professionals would solve some of the present difficulties (which would require adequate budgets be allotted);

4. Palliative care and even curative care are the first victims of the legalisation of euthanasia. Where euthanasia, or “assisted suicide”, has been legalised, budgets for life-affirming palliative care (including pain and symptom alleviation) have been cut, even to the point, for example, that the cost of assisted suicide is covered, but not life-enhancing treatments like chemotherapy (Oregon, US);

5. The legalisation of euthanasia would radically change the practice

of medicine. Studies show that we have a natural instinct against killing our fellow humans and that in order to do so we have to dehumanize them. Euthanasia, therefore, creates a situation in which doctors’ instinct against killing must be blunted and patients dehumanized. These are very dangerous paths to take, as history shows us. Furthermore, legal euthanasia makes patients very apprehensive about treatment protocols, fearing that they might be euthanized. Many doctors find patients so difficult to treat that they leave their country to practise where the doctor-patient bond of trust has not been broken by the legalisation of euthanasia and assisted suicide (as is the case for many doctors in Switzerland, for example). Other doctors leave because they are forced to kill people against their will (against the will of the doctor and/or without the consent or request of the patient);

6. In short, the risks and consequences for society of legalising euthanasia far outweigh any possible benefits some individuals may garner. Investing in life-affirming choices remains the most beneficial means to achieve well-being if a society wishes to remain civilised. *Français au verso*