To Relieve the Suffering

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As time goes by and medical advances continue to move the medical field further into the future one issue remains. Is a person allowed to choose when and how they will die if they are suffering from a terminal illness that will claim their life? Many agree that this is so. That it is the right of every person to decide when the pain is too much for them and that it would be better to end the pain. Those who see this come from a place of wanting to relieve the pain and suffering of those whose lives will see no improvement (Byock & Kleiman, 2015). Those who fight for this right have a valid reason for wanting their loved ones to be able to die a dignified death. They wish to allow the sufferer to be free of the debilitating pain and the loss of independence that they have to endure as they wait for their final breaths to finally come.

It is admirable to know of how groups like the Right-to-Die fight to allow people who are suffering from unbearable pain of a terminal illness to be able to end their suffering in the most painless way they can. The means they seek is to allow a sufferer to end their suffering by means of physician assisted suicide. This is a method of giving a lethal dose of drugs to a patient suffering from server pain or from a terminal illness. They fight to give the people control of what to do with the final days of their lives instead of having them suffer. Kleiman states that point of view wonderfully when he wrote, “Some suffer from intractable physical pain. Others find their physical and mental powers failing and hate the thought of being dependent on others for basic activities such as eating and keeping clean”(Byock & Kleiman, 2015). He goes on to explains that perhaps if the laws were changed within the US that perhaps some or most of this suffering would finally end (Byock & Kleiman, 2015).

While this point of view is respectable looking at the bigger picture there must be another way to aid those suffering from incurable and terminal illnesses towards a peaceful end without assisting in the immediate death of the patient. While the laws that allow this kind of treatment still stands in states like Oregon there is still chance for misuse of it. “The legalization of assisted suicide always appears acceptable when the focus is solely on an individual. But it is important to remember that doing so would have repercussions across all of society, and would put many people at risk of immense harm” (Golden, 2014). What Golden is trying to point out is that while the legalization of this means of treating a terminal patient seems favorable when looked at on an individual basis when thinking of treating pain or loss of independence it can still do a lot of harm to society as a whole.

With legalization of assisted suicide can come unforeseen problems that many advocating for this type of treatment have not fully thought through. For example, often times a terminal diagnosis is not always correct, which can lead to the sufferer prematurely ending their life before the mistake is found out (Golden, 2014). The price tag on physician assisted suicide in state that allow it is less than 300 dollars (Golden, 2014). Because of the cheapness of the treatment patients seemed to be steered towards this method of care (Golden, 2014).There is also the potential for those who wish to collect on the inheritance of the sufferer steering them towards the treatment as a means of collection without having to wait (Golden,2014). This is a very alarming prospect.

There is also the fact that despite this being a way to end suffering by those who are going to eventually die that it is still considered suicide. Such a method of ending one’s life has been discouraged since ancient times and should be upheld (Byock & Kleiman, 2105). Also the medical profession was founded on principles of preserving life and alleviating suffering (Byock & Kleiman, 2015). Even the Hippocratic Oath that is taken by doctors entering the profession states that they are not there to harm but there to heal. Assisting in the suicide of a terminally ill patient despite the fact that it would ease their pain is against the ethics of the profession.

As time goes on, the issue of assisted suicide will be made clearer to those who are considering it as a method of treatment. However well-meaning it is to want to relieve the pain of those suffering under terminal illness it does not take away the fact that this is still a method of suicide and not a true treatment to the pain of the sufferer.

References

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