

Quick Facts About Assisted Suicide

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<http://www.choiceillusion.org/2013/11/quick-facts-about-assisted-suicide.html>

1. Assisted Suicide

Assisted suicide means that someone provides the means and/or information for another person to commit suicide. When a physician is involved, the practice is physician-assisted suicide.[1]

2. The Oregon and Washington Laws

In Oregon, physician-assisted suicide was legalized in 1997 via a ballot measure.[2] In Washington State, a similar law was passed via another ballot measure in 2008 and went into effect in 2009.[3]

3. Throwing Away Your Life

The Oregon and Washington laws apply to state residents predicted to have less than six months to live.[5] Such persons are not necessarily dying. Doctors can be wrong.[6] Moreover, treatment can lead to recovery. Consider Jeanette Hall, who was diagnosed with cancer and given six months to a year to live.[7] She was adamant that she would "do" Oregon's law, but her doctor, Ken Stevens, convinced her to be treated instead.[8] She is still alive today, 13 years later.[9]

With legal assisted suicide, people with many quality years to live are encouraged to throw away their lives.

4. A Recipe for Elder Abuse

The Washington and Oregon laws are a recipe for elder abuse. The most obvious reason is due to a lack of oversight when the lethal dose is administered.[10] For example, there are no witnesses required at the death; the death is allowed occur in private.[11] With this situation, the opportunity is created for an heir, or some other person who will benefit from the patient's death, to administer the lethal dose to the patient without her consent. Even if she struggled, who would know?

For more detail about Washington's law, which is similar to Oregon's law, read a short article by [clicking here](#).

5. Empowering the Healthcare System

In Oregon, patients desiring treatment under the Oregon Health Plan have been offered assisted suicide instead.

The most well known cases involve Barbara Wagner and Randy Stroup.[12] Each wanted treatment.[13] The Plan denied their requests and offered to pay for their suicides instead.[14] Neither Wagner nor Stroup saw this scenario as a celebration of their "choice." Wagner said: "I'm not ready to die." [15] Stroup said: "This is my life they're playing with." [16]

Wagner and Stroup were steered to suicide. Moreover, it was the Oregon Health Plan, a government entity, doing the steering.[17] For more detail about the current situation, read the affidavit of Kenneth Stevens, by [clicking here](#).

6. Increased Suicide in Oregon

Oregon's suicide rate, which excludes suicides under its physician-assisted suicide law, has been "increasing significantly" since 2000.[18]

Just three years prior, Oregon legalized physician-assisted suicide. This increased suicide rate is consistent with a suicide contagion in which removing the stigma from one type of suicide encouraged other suicides. Montana already has one of the highest suicide rates in the nation.[19]

7. Proposed Expansion in Washington State

Washington State legalized physician-assisted suicide in March 2009. Just three years later, there were already discussions to expand that law to direct euthanasia of non-terminal people.[20] For example, on March 8, 2012, there was a *Seattle Times* column suggesting euthanasia as a solution for people unable to support themselves, which would be involuntary euthanasia. See Jerry Large, "Planning for old age at a premium," *The Seattle Times*, March 8, 2012 at <http://seattletimes.nwsourc.com/text/2017693023.html> ("After Monday's column, . . . a few [readers] suggested that if you couldn't save enough money to see you through your old age, you shouldn't expect society to bail you out. *At least a couple mentioned euthanasia as a solution.*") (Emphasis added).

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[1] Compare: American Medical Association, Code of Medical Ethics, Opinion 2.211, available at <http://www.ama-assn.org/ama/pub/physician-resources/medical-ethics/code-medical-ethics/opinion2211.page>

[2] The Oregon and Washington laws are similar. For a short article about Washington's law, see Margaret K. Dore, "'Death with Dignity': What Do We Advise Our Clients?," King County Bar Association, Bar Bulletin, May 2009, available at <https://www.kcba.org/newsevents/barbulletin/BView.aspx?Month=05&Year=2009&AID=article5.htm>

[3] Id.

[5] See ORS 127.800 s.1.01(12) and RCW 70.245.010(13).

[6] See e.g., Nina Shapiro, "Terminal Uncertainty: Washington's new "Death With Dignity" law

allows doctors to help people commit suicide once they've determined that the patient has only six months to live. But what if they're wrong?," 01/14/09, available at <http://www.seattleweekly.com/2009-01-14/news/terminal-uncertainty>

[7] See Jeanette Hall, Letter to the editor, "She pushed for legal right to die, and - thankfully - was rebuffed," *Boston Globe*, October 4, 2011 ("I am so happy to be alive!"), available at http://www.boston.com/bostonglobe/editorial_opinion/letters/articles/2011/10/04/she_pushed_for_legal_right_to_die_and_thankfully_was_rebuffed/; Kenneth Stevens MD, Letter to the Editor, "Oregon mistake costs lives," *The Advocate*, the official publication of the Idaho State Bar, Sept. 2010, (scroll down to last letter at www.margaretdore.com/info/Stevens.pdf).

[8] *Id.*

[9] Per her telephone call today.

[10] The Oregon and Washington Acts can be viewed in their entirety [here](#) and [here](#).

[11] *Id.*

[12] See Susan Donaldson James, "Death Drugs Cause Uproar in Oregon," ABC News, August 6, 2008, at <http://abcnews.go.com/Health/story?id=5517492&page=1>; "Letter noting assisted suicide raises questions," KATU TV, July 30, 2008, at <http://www.katu.com/news/specialreports/26119539.html>; and Ken Stevens, MD, Letter to Editor, "Oregon mistake costs lives," *The Advocate*, the official publication of the Idaho State Bar, September 2011, to view, scroll down to bottom of second page here: http://www.margaretdore.com/info/September_Letters.pdf

[13] *Id.*

[14] *Id.*

[15] KATU TV at note 12

[16] ABC News at note 12

[17] See also Affidavit of Ken Stevens MD (*Leblanc v. Canada*), with attachments, available at <http://maasdocuments.files.wordpress.com/2012/09/signed-stevens-aff-9-18-12.pdf>

[18] See "Suicides in Oregon: Trends and Risk Factors," Oregon Department of Human Services, Public Health Division, September 2010, page 6, ("Deaths relating to the death with Dignity Act (physician-assisted suicides) are not classified as suicides by Oregon law and therefore excluded from this report"), available at http://epcdocuments.files.wordpress.com/2011/10/or_suicide_report_001.pdf

See also Oregon Health Authority, News Release, "Rising suicide rate in Oregon reaches higher than national average," September 9, 2010, ("suicide rates have been increasing significantly since 2000") available at <http://www.oregon.gov/DHS/news/2010news/2010-0909a.pdf>

[19] Cindy Uken, "State of Dispair: High-Country Crisis, Montana's suicide rate leads the nation," *Billings Gazette*, November 25, 2012, http://billingsgazette.com/news/state-and-regional/montana/montana-s-suicide-rate-leads-the-nation/article_b7b6f110-3e5c-5425-b7f6-792cc666008d.html?print=true&cid=print

[20] See Brian Faller, "Perhaps it's time to expand Washington's Death with Dignity Act," *The Olympian*, November 16, 2011, available at <http://www.theolympian.com/2011/11/16/1878667/perhaps-its-time-to-expand-washingtons.html>

