



Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide Terminology Fact Sheet

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- Assisted suicide is defined by the Criminal Code as “counsel(ing) a person to commit suicide, or aid(ing) or abet(ing) a person to commit suicide”. [1] This is specifically outlawed in Section 14 of the Criminal Code. [2]
 - “Aid in dying” is a term sometimes used by those in favour of legalization. It means assisted suicide, but removes the word suicide to make assisted suicide more palatable to the public.
- “Doctor-assisted suicide” or “physician assisted death” simply means that a doctor was the one who acted to encourage or help a person to commit suicide.
- Euthanasia is defined as “the deliberate act undertaken by one person with the intention of ending the life of another person in order to relieve that person's suffering where that act is the cause of death.” [3] Section 241 of the Criminal code states that euthanasia is illegal in Canada. [4]
- “Active euthanasia” is just as the above definition says. [5]
- “Passive euthanasia” is a euphemism used to describe death by withdrawal or withholding of treatment. Patients have the right to refuse or withdraw treatment, and where doctors do, as long as they don't intend to hasten death as a result, this is legal in Canada. But where such treatment is “life-sustaining”, in the words of the Senate Special Committee, withdrawing it is active euthanasia because withdrawal will hasten death unnaturally. [6]
- Palliative care: “Palliative care is an approach to care for people who are living with a life-threatening illness, no matter how old they are. The focus of care is on achieving comfort and ensuring respect for the person nearing death and maximizing quality of life for the patient, family and loved ones.” [7]
 - Dame Cicely Saunders, the founder of St. Christopher's Hospice in London and the founder of the modern hospice movement, described the work of hospice nurses this way: “We will do all we can not only to help you die peacefully, but also to live until you die.” [8]
- “Dying with dignity” is the tag phrase of those who push to legalize euthanasia and assisted suicide. This phrase attempts to co-opt the term dignity and presumes that without the option of assisted suicide and/or euthanasia, individuals cannot die a dignified death. The research of Dr. Harvey Chochinov, an internationally recognized palliative care doctor and researcher, shows this definition to be too simplistic. He has found that dignity in terminally-ill patients is recoverable through therapy while living. [9]

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Endnotes

- [1] The Criminal Code of Canada, Section 241. Retrieved from <http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-46/page-119.html#h-78>
- [2] *Ibid*, Section 14. Retrieved September 9, 2010 from <http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/acts/C-46/page-5.html#docCont>
- [3] The Special Senate Committee on Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide. (1995). Of Life and Death – Final Report. Chapter II, Terminology. Retrieved September 21, 2010 from <http://www.parl.gc.ca/35/1/parlbus/commbus/senate/com-e/euth-e/rep-e/lad-e.htm>
- [4] Criminal Code of Canada, Section 241.
- [5] The Special Senate Committee on Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide. (1995).
- [6] *Ibid*.
- [7] Health Canada. (2009). Palliative and End of Life Care. Retrieved September 17, 2010 from <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hcs-sss/palliat/index-eng.php>
- [8] Picard, A. (2010, July 21.) There are a lot better places to die than Canada. *The Globe and Mail*, p. L1.
- [9] Chochinov, H. (2002). Dignity Conserving Care - A New Model for Palliative Care. *Journal of the American Medical Association*. Volume 287, Issue 17, pp. 2253-2260.