

**Euthanasia** – is the painless killing of a patient suffering from an incurable and painful disease, or in an irreversible coma. Also called 'mercy killing'. The act of putting to death painlessly or allowing to die, as by withholding extreme medical measures, a person or animal suffering from an incurable and especially, a painful disease or condition.

It is legal (for humans) as of June 2016 in the Netherlands, Belgium, Colombia and Luxembourg. Assisted suicide is legal in Switzerland, Germany, Japan, Canada and in the states of Washington, Oregon, Vermont, Montana and California.

Euthanasia is illegal in the UK. Any person found to be assisting suicide is breaking the law and can be convicted of assisting suicide or attempting to do so. However, the DPP has issued guidelines setting out when a prosecution is, or is not, likely to happen. Currently Dr Nigel Cox is the only British doctor to have been convicted of attempted euthanasia. He was given a 12 month suspended sentence in 1992. Attempts have been made to legalise voluntary euthanasia but all have been rejected by the UK.

### **Some pros & cons:**

- 1) Right to freedom of choice
  - 2) Frees up medical funds to help other people
  - 3) It provides a way of relief when a person's quality of life is low
  - 4) It provides a way to relieve extreme pain
- 
- 1) Euthanasia devalues human life
  - 2) Euthanasia can become a means of health care containment
  - 3) Physicians and other medical care people should not be involved in directly causing death
  - 4) There is a 'slippery slope' effect that has occurred where euthanasia has been legalised only for the terminally ill and later laws are changed to allow it for other people or to be done non-voluntarily

### **Related online articles:**

I want to die by assisted suicide, says Archbishop Desmond Tutu on his 85th birthday

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3826848/Desmond-Tutu-celebrates-85th-birthday-Cape-Town-cathedral.html>

Former actor and disability campaigner Brian Rix, 92, calls for euthanasia to be legalised so he can 'slip away peacefully' after revealing he is terminally ill

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3726401/Former-actor-disability-campaigner-Brian-Rix-92-calls-euthanasia-legalised-slip-away-peacefully-revealing-terminally-ill.html>

Tony Nicklinson loses High Court right-to-die case

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-19249680>

Whether or not any of us have the legal right to request help to end our own lives is dependent on the laws of the day in the country you reside. Consequently, the morality of euthanasia is subject to the powers that be at any given time. However, laws that support or deny euthanasia cannot serve the best interests of all individuals. Is it better therefore that there are conflicting options in different countries?