

## **Euthanasia: arguments for and against**

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### **Introduction**

Euthanasia is the act of deliberately ending a person's life to relieve suffering. Currently, it is one of the most controversial topics in the modern society. Euthanasia has already been legalized in five countries (Belgium, The Netherlands, Luxembourg, Colombia, Canada), five states in the USA (California, Oregon, Washington, Vermont, Montana), and physician-assisted suicide – in eight countries, including Finland, Germany, Switzerland. Exactly due to the increasing number of countries, where euthanasia is allowed, many ethical issues become relevant:

When to stop the treatment of a terminal patient?

Should palliative care be developed and can it replace euthanasia?

How will euthanasia affect medicine and society in the future?

### **Aim of the study**

To analyze arguments for and against euthanasia, to consider the reasons and consequences of its application, to study the opinions of BSMU students about this issue.

### **Materials and methods**

The results of scientific work, held in UK, USA and other countries, Internet resources were explored to systematize the information on the problem. The opinion poll was held to collect the data. The research involved 110 respondents among the BSMU students.

### **Results**

Euthanasia can be classified into several types: voluntary, non-voluntary, involuntary; active and passive. There is a difference between euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide. The last one involves providing a patient with the means to intentionally end his own life. There are different arguments, which support or reject the practice of euthanasia, and they will be discussed in this work.

Arguments for euthanasia include: 1) deliverance from suffering; 2) dignity in death; 3) the right of choice; 4) "thrift euthanasia" (when resources are limited); 5) prevention of botched suicides; 6) the right of natural death; 7) relieving suffering by relatives.

Arguments against euthanasia: 1) religious beliefs (sanctity of human life); 2) license for murder; 3) erosion of confidence in physicians; 4) possibility of medical error in the ultimate diagnosis; 5) ambiguity of definition of "terminally ill"; 6) the emergence of new ways of treatment; 7) the impossibility of making competent and rational decision; 8) undiagnosed clinical depression.

According to the results of the study, 80% of BSMU students have positive attitude to euthanasia. Among them, 60.2% consider that the main advantage of euthanasia is to relieve the patient's sufferings and 29.5% of students think that it is necessary to give a patient the right of choice. Among those who are against euthanasia (20%), the majority chose a variant that euthanasia leads to disruption of confidence in physicians. 50 % of students consider that palliative care can be an alternative to euthanasia.

### **Conclusion**

The rapid change of the public views all over the world implies that the legalization of voluntary euthanasia will take place in more countries in the near future. Of course, there are some immutable values including respect for personal opinion, medical authority, religious beliefs, or protection of vulnerable patients, such arguments are related to cultural significance and traditions. When palliative care no longer brings relief, the option to choose euthanasia should remain open at all times. At the same time, developing of palliative care can become an alternative to euthanasia.