Aiding Suicide

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# Introduction

Consistent advancement in technology and pharmaceuticals has always placed the medical community at a crossroads, when we talk about making life-threatening decisions. This paper will analyze healthcare professional positions concerning the doctor’s role in assisted suicide. Assisted Suicide tends to be a controversial topic which is the voluntary end of one's own life by taking lethal medicines with assistance of a physician. In other words, it is the service given by physician for terminating an ill patient who chooses death in a way by exercising the right to govern his own life. Assisted suicide can also be referred as active euthanasia whereas; Passive euthanasia is the act of removing medical machines and allowing the illness to take the patient’s life.

Most of the countries such as US have made physician-assisted suicide illegal and medical community does not encourage the practice of assisted suicide (N Steck, 2014).This paper illustrates the different cases of patients, and opinions within the field of law and medicine. In some circumstances, doctors make logical decisions related to assisted suicide followed by a code of ethics. On the other hand, European counties have made assisted suicide legalized making active euthanasia challenging and the norms of medical professionalism.

# Discussion

According to the principle of the sanity of life, human life is essential. Health care services work on the principle of sanity of life. Physician-assisted suicide is either aided by physician or other health care personnel, is considered only under the circumstances when it is clear that the patient is not going to get better and he/ she is in severe pain with every breath he/she takes. In United States, it is crime to help a person die. The main goal of any health care professional is to provide overall care to the patient. Overall care includes physical and psychological health of a person. Ethics in health care are important aspect which medical practitioner has to follow. Principles of health care ethics which provides guidelines to health-care professional for making best decisions in complicated situations. Autonomy, Beneficence, Justice, and Veracity are the principles of health care ethics put forth by James Childress and Beauchamp in 1985.

The principle of autonomy in health care means that the person has a right to have control over his/her body. A health care professional can only suggest or advise the treatment, a patient has all the right to take the decision (Herring, 2014). There are some circumstances when the patient is unaware and decisions are taken by their spouse or another family member. Assisted suicide does not work this way, one of the basic criteria of assisted suicide is that the patient should be of sound mind. In other words, patient should take the decision and should be aware of its consequences. According to the principle of autonomy, if the patient is aware of the situation and knows what would happen if he/she is injected with a lethal drug, assistive suicide is justified. If some health care personnel persuade a patient into assistive suicide, it is the violation of principle of autonomy and is a crime. The patient should be able to take his/her own decision according to personal beliefs and values.

The beneficence principle of ethics in health care means that the health care professional must do everything in his/ her power which will eventually benefit the patient (Gillon, 2015). Death is inevitable for an individual suffering from a chronic condition. Thus, with no way to improve quality of life for such an individual, a life of pain is simply not worth it.. In severe chronic condition, patient is eventually going to die, and pain that a patient is suffering from is not worth it. Under such circumstances, assistive suicide benefits the patient by taking away his/ her pain. To understand the principle of benefit in assistive suicide, one should first understand the condition of the patient. The pain, suffering, and humiliation of patients can be so high that it is become unbearable, and is also affecting his/ her mental health. Eventually a patient loses will to live in the cases of assistive suicide.

The justice principle in health care focuses on equality in healthcare system. It is a key duty of health care professionals to treat each patient impartially, fairly, and equally. Principle of justice is linked with principle of beneficence and health care professional to give their best to benefit the patient. Principle of Veracity means that health care professionals should always tell truth to their patients. Telling a truth to the patient about his/ her health in the most human way possible is must for a physician (GD Byrd, 2014). According to ethics of health care, the patient has a right to know the truth to understand his/ her troubles and conditions.

Like doctors, nurses also have code of ethics for patient care. Nursing staff learns about patient care with compassion to understand what better care is. With practices in the field, nurses learn to understand unique aspects of patient’s behavior and nature. Nurses are the individuals who are on the frontline, provide care to the patient. Nurses have to gain the trust of their patient to better understand their condition and provide best health care recommended and is advised by the physician (Finkelman & Kenner, 2016). In assistive suicide, role of nurse is of great significance, this is because they spend more time with the patients, and are well aware of patient’s physical and mental health. In assistive suicide has to be aware of his condition and should understand the consequences of taking his life. If all the parameter of assistive suicide are met and patient is willing to go for an option of assistive suicide, nurses plays an important role either in assisting the procedure or changing the mind of their patient. When the patient has chronic decease and is wanting assistive suicide because of his unbearable condition and hopelessness, nurse can help the patient by providing good care and by changing the patient’s mind. Although convincing patients not to go for the option of assistive suicide is a role of mental health professional, nurses can also play part in helping the patient psychologically.

# Conclusion

In this paper aspects of assistive or aiding suicide are linked with the ethics of health care their aspects are explained. Although, assistive suicide is illegal in United States, it is being practices in European countries and Canada. In assistive suicide, physician or other healthcare professional aid the patient in taking his/ her life. If the patient is not aware of his/ her condition, thinking of an assistive suicide is impossible. Moreover, patients have complete right to know their condition for peace of mind. There is a concept of Mercy Killing which means that a poor living thing who is in misery are killed to help them free from the nightmare of pain. Approach used in assistive suicide is similar to Mercy Killing concept up to some extent. Nurses can also help the patient by supporting their case when conveying the case of assistive suicide to the physicians.

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