



ETHICAL DIMENSIONS

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Jack Kevorkian assists Jonathon Grenz

Jonathon Grenz of Costa Mesa, California sought and received the help of Jack Kevorkian in ending his life in mid-February, 1993. He was 43 years old when he ended his life. A year before his death he was diagnosed with throat cancer. As the disease spread, physicians surgically removed most of his tongue and implanted an electronic device on his neck to help him speak. His growing fatigue, severe impairments, and progressing illness made him withdraw more and more from contact with friends and neighbors. In a final letter to a friend he said, "I guess there's no reason to prolong any of this. I'm just not going to get any better and time goes by so slowly that it is unbearable. Life is not life any more."

This case can be considered from the perspectives of individual ethics, institutional ethics and societal ethics. Please answer the following questions in these areas using this scale:

1 strongly agree 2 agree 3 not sure 4 disagree 5 strongly disagree

Individual Ethics

1. Mr. Grenz has the right to end his life when it has lost its meaning for him.

1 2 3 4 5

2. Mr. Grenz has a right to ask others to assist in taking his life.

1 2 3 4 5

3. Others have a duty to assist him when he so requests.

1 2 3 4 5

4. There is no significant ethical difference between his refusing life-prolonging treatment and acting to end his life.

1 2 3 4 5

5. Physicians should be protected from liability if they assist in ending his life.

1 2 3 4 5

6. Persons have a right to refuse treatment but not to ask others to kill them.

1 2 3 4 5

Institutional Ethics

1. The state medical society should discipline a physician who assists with such a request.

1 2 3 4 5

2. The state medical society should advocate for changes in the law that would permit such assistance.

1 2 3 4 5

3. The medical staff of a hospital should try to come to consensus on euthanasia.

1 2 3 4 5

4. The medical staff should lobby for public policy in this issue.

1 2 3 4 5

5. A hospital should be willing to assist patients who request euthanasia.

1 2 3 4 5

6. A hospital should be active in political efforts concerning the legalization of euthanasia.

1 2 3 4 5

Societal Ethics

1. An individual's right to end their life should be assured by law.

1 2 3 4 5

2. Such legalization should be rejected since it establishes private killing with grave social consequences.

1 2 3 4 5

3. Before we legalize euthanasia we should provide adequate care for dying patients.

1 2 3 4 5

4. U.S. biases concerning gender and race can be expected to show up in the practice of euthanasia.

1 2 3 4 5

5. What begins as empowering patients may well end in actual empowering of physicians.

1 2 3 4 5

6. There are many options we should consider between present law and simple legalization of euthanasia.

1 2 3 4 5

An essential first step in dealing with ethical issues is to determine on which level we are working. Then we can decide *who* and *what ethical tools* are needed to address adequately the question on that level. The people and tools suited to one level are not always appropriate for other levels.



**OPINIONS AND FEELINGS ARE FREQUENTLY A PERSONAL TRIUMPH OVER GOOD THINKING
YOU DEFINE REALITY BY WHAT YOU KNOW, WHAT YOU BELIEVE, AND WHAT YOU DO ABOUT IT.**