14. EUTHANASIA IN PATIENTS WITH INCURABLE DISEASES – A BIOETHICAL ANALYSIS REGARDING THE OPPORTUNITY OF LEGALIZATION

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Introduction. Euthanasia is a medical practice, aimed at inducing premature and painless death in patients with incurable diseases, with the purpose of alleviating severe and/or prolonged suffering. The legalization of euthanasia in certain countries is often morally justified through the principles of autonomy and beneficence, with decisions made in accordance with the patient's will. However, the principle of autonomy alone is insufficient to ethically justify euthanasia from the standpoint of the physician's professional duties, while the principle of beneficence raises complex and controversial ethical issues.

Aim of study. A bioethical analysis of the opportunity to legalize euthanasia, highlighting the moral dilemma between respecting patient autonomy and the physician's responsibilities. The study aims to provide a critical analysis and evaluation of arguments in favor of euthanasia, examining how different theoretical perspectives justify or constrain medical actions within a normative ethical framework.

Methods and materials. A review of the specialized literature from the past 15 years was conducted using the databases PubMed, Scopus, and Web of Science, employing the following keywords: euthanasia, bioethical analysis, medical ethics, patient autonomy, and moral dilemma. Conceptual analysis was used as the main research methodology, and complemented by a critical evaluation within a comparative analysis.

Results. The review of the literature indicates that the patient's autonomous request is a core ethical determinant, granting moral permissibility to the act and functioning as a justificatory factor. This perspective assumes that, under conditions of unbearable suffering with no prospects for improvement, quality of life is so diminished that the public interest may consider euthanasia tolerable. Nevertheless, in some patients, the validity of this assumption may be challenged.

Conclusions. Euthanasia constitutes a central bioethical issue in extreme medical contexts and end-of-life situations. Within the context of conflicting moral obligations, even in the presence of principles opposing this practice, it may be regarded as ethically justifiable under certain circumstances. This is particularly the case when the patient makes a voluntary decision, submits an autonomous request, and endures suffering that is intolerable and devoid of hope. Consequently, in such circumstances, the physician may justifiably place the alleviation of the patient's suffering above personal moral beliefs, acting to anticipate a natural outcome, even if this intervention may limit the patient's ability to conclude life in a manner seen as dignified and autonomous.

Keywords. bioethics, euthanasia, incurable diseases, assisted suicide, palliative care.

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