

Alternatives to the Death With Dignity Act

Any patient considering physician-assisted dying should be aware of other end-of-life options.

Discontinuing Treatment

For terminally ill patients, aggressive treatment may not be helpful and may prolong the dying process without improving the quality of life. You always have the right to refuse any and all treatment.

Hospice and Palliative Care

Continuous medical treatment of pain and other symptoms allows a peaceful end of life for most patients. Dying occurs naturally. If you wish to die at home, hospice is the best way to get optimal care. Hospice caregivers provide pain medications and other medical care, counseling, family support and assistance in planning. Hospice may be the best option for patients who can no longer make end-of-life decisions for themselves because of dementia or other medical conditions.



Decision to Voluntarily Stop Eating and Drinking

When patients die naturally of chronic diseases, such as cancer, bodily changes take away their appetite, and they stop eating before they die. Some persons decide to hasten the dying process by Voluntarily Stopping Eating and Drinking (VSED), which also relieves some of the symptoms common to dying. If a patient is already close to death, VSED usually leads to death in 3-8 days. A patient who begins VSED prior to its natural occurrence should expect hunger and thirst for a few days before the onset of coma. These symptoms can be relieved by medications. It is important to avoid sips of water or other fluids, as this will prolong the process. Many persons have used this method successfully. Compassion & Choices of Oregon recommends patients choosing VSED discuss their decision with all caregivers and make sure their caregivers are knowledgeable about VSED. C&C believes hospice care is essential during VSED. Contact us for our documents on this process.

Palliative Sedation

Some dying patients experience so much pain or unmanageable symptoms they cannot get relief from medications unless the dose is high enough to make them unconscious. Palliative sedation provides enough medication to keep the person unconscious and continuously pain and symptom-free. All nutrients and fluids are stopped, and the person usually dies within a few days. Patients using palliative sedation should be monitored around the clock to be sure the sedation is adequate. Intensive monitoring can be done at home under hospice care.

Compassion & Choices of Oregon provides advice and support to patients and families considering all end-of-life decisions. If you are not already a client of Compassion & Choices of Oregon, call us for information and support for all your end-of-life choices.

For more information, call 503-525-1956, email contact@compassionoforegon.org, or go to www.compassionoforegon.org