

# WRONGFUL DEATHS BY ASSISTED SUICIDE OR EUTHANASIA

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## NOT A RAPID OR PEACEFUL DEATH

The case for legalising assisted suicide and euthanasia **simplistically assumes** that once legalised such deaths will be both rapid and peaceful. However, this is not the case. As [a recent article](#) in the journal *Anaesthesia* found:

*Complications related to assisted dying methods were found to include difficulty in swallowing the prescribed dose ( $\leq 9\%$ ), a relatively high incidence of vomiting ( $\leq 10\%$ ), prolongation of death (by as much as seven days in  $\leq 4\%$ ), and failure to induce coma, where patients re-awoke and even sat up ( $\leq 1.3\%$ ).*

*This raises a concern that some deaths may be inhumane.*

## Netherlands

Technical problems, complications and problems with completion in the administration of lethal drugs for euthanasia have been [reported](#) from the Netherlands.

Technical problems occurred in 5% of cases. The most common technical problems were difficulty finding a vein in which to inject the drug and difficulty administering an oral medication.

Complications occurred in 3% of cases of euthanasia, including spasm or myoclonus (muscular twitching), cyanosis (blue colouring of the skin), nausea or vomiting, tachycardia (rapid heartbeat), excessive production of mucus, hiccups, perspiration, and extreme gasping. In one case the patient's eyes remained open, and in another case, the patient sat up.

In 10% of cases the person took longer than expected to die (median 3 hours) with one person taking up to 7 days.

From 2016 to July 2018 the Board of Procurators General [reported](#) on 11 cases of euthanasia with serious breach of protocols by the doctor, including a failed assisted suicide because the doctor ordered the wrong drug;

seven cases of the muscle relaxant being administered when the person was not in a full coma and therefore potentially causing pain;

and three cases where a first attempt at euthanasia failed and the doctor had to leave the person to get a second batch of lethal drugs.

## Oregon

In Oregon in [2018](#) nearly four out of ten (39.28%) of all deaths by ingesting a lethal dose involved a cocktail in which morphine sulfate was the main lethal substance.

This experimental lethal cocktail does not always result in a swift and peaceful death.

In 2018 one in nine (11.11%) of those for whom information about the circumstances of their deaths is available either had difficulty ingesting or regurgitated the lethal dose or had other complications. Two people had seizures in [2017](#).

The interval from ingestion of lethal drugs to unconsciousness has been as long as four hours (in 2017).

The time from ingestion to death has been as long as 104 hours (4 days and 8 hours). One person in 2018 took 14 hours to die.

A total of 8 people have regained consciousness after taking the supposedly lethal dose, including one person in 2018.

In [2005](#), "One patient became unconscious 25 minutes after ingestion, then regained consciousness 65 hours later. This person did not obtain a subsequent prescription, and died 14 days later of the underlying illness (17 days after ingesting the medication).

This patient was lumberjack David Prueitt who, after ingesting the prescribed barbiturates spent three days in a deep coma, then suddenly woke up, asking his wife "Honey, what the hell happened? Why am I not dead?"

David [survived for another 14 days before dying naturally from his cancer](#).

Since 2005 seven other people have regained consciousness after ingesting the lethal medication.

*"In 2010, two patients regained consciousness after ingesting medications. One patient regained consciousness 88 hours after ingesting the medication, subsequently dying from underlying illness three months later. The other patient regained consciousness within 24 hours, subsequently dying from underlying illness five days following ingestion.*

*In [2011](#), two patients regained consciousness after ingesting the medication. One of the patients very briefly regained consciousness after ingesting the prescribed medication and died from underlying illness about 30 hours later. The other patient regained consciousness approximately 14 hours after ingesting the medication and died from underlying illness about 38 hours later."*

In [2012](#) "one patient ingested the medication but regained consciousness before dying of underlying illness ... The patient regained consciousness two days following ingestion, but remained minimally responsive and died six days following ingestion".

In [2017](#) "one patient ingested the medication but regained consciousness before dying from the underlying illness".

In [2018](#) one person regained consciousness after ingesting the prescribed substance and later died of the underlying illness.

Two of the cases of regaining consciousness occurred after using DDMP2 – the latest experimental lethal cocktail being used by pro-assisted suicide doctors.

## Washington

In [2017](#) one person took 6 hours to lose consciousness after ingesting the lethal dose and one person took 35 hours to die after ingesting the lethal dose. In [2016](#) one person took 11 hours to lose consciousness after ingesting the lethal dose. In [2015](#) one person took 72 hours (3 days) to die after ingesting the dose. In [2013](#) one person took 3 hours to lose consciousness after ingesting the lethal dose and one person took 41 hours (1 day and 17 hours) to die after ingesting the dose. In [2009](#) two people awakened after initially losing consciousness. In [2014](#) one person suffered seizures after ingesting the lethal medication.

At least 18 patients have regurgitated the lethal medication. Seven of these cases occurred in [2016](#) alone.

This may be related to the use of new experimental cocktails of lethal drugs being used since the price of the previously used drugs, secobarbital and pentobarbital (Nembutal), escalated.

The first of the new cocktails is a mix of phenobarbital, chloral hydrate and morphine sulfate. It was prescribed in 88 cases in [2015](#) and 106 cases in [2016](#) but no longer prescribed in 2017 no doubt due to the fact that it was [found to be very caustic](#) and to cause a profound burning in the throat.

The second experimental cocktail includes morphine sulfate, propranolol, diazepam, digoxin and a buffer suspension. It was used in 4 cases in [2015](#), 53 cases in [2016](#) and 130 cases (66%) in [2017](#).

## DDMP2

The latest attempt at an experimental lethal cocktail aimed at delivering a rapid and peaceful death is a failure.

The [2018 Data Summary](#) from Oregon reports on 43 cases of (attempted or completed) assisted suicide using DDMP2 where the results were observed and recorded.

12 people out of 43 (27.9%) died between 13 and 59 minutes of ingesting the lethal cocktail.

19 people (44.18%) died between 1 and 6 hours of ingesting the lethal cocktail.

10 people (23.2%) or almost one out of four people took between 6 and 21 hours to die after ingesting the lethal cocktail.

2 people (4.65%) regained consciousness and did not die after ingesting the (supposedly) lethal cocktail.