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## American Psychiatric Association takes historic stand on assisted suicide and euthanasia

by Michael Cook | 17 Dec 2016 | 124 comments



The American Psychiatric Association (APA) has taken a strong stand against euthanasia. In a **formal position statement** approved by its board of trustees this month, it says:

The American Psychiatric Association, in concert with the American Medical Association's position on Medical Euthanasia, holds that a psychiatrist should not prescribe or administer any intervention to a non-terminally ill person for the purpose of causing death.

This implies that it is not ethical for a psychiatrist to help a non-terminally ill person to commit suicide, either by providing the means or by direct lethal injection, as is being currently practiced in The Netherlands and Belgium.

Although this binds only APA members, the APA is one of the world's most influential professional bodies. The World Psychiatric Association (WPA) is considering a similar statement.

Dr Mark S. Komrad, of the APA ethics committee, says that the APA is now in a **position to formally protest** the involvement of Dutch and Belgian psychiatrists in euthanising patients with non-terminal psychiatric disorders.

He fears that Canada and several states in the US are headed in the same direction. Already psychiatric patients are being helped to commit suicide by activist organisations like Final Exit.

"So far, no other country that has implemented physician-assisted suicide has been able to constrain its application solely to the terminally ill, eventually including non-terminal patients as legally eligible as well," says Dr Komrad. "This is when psychiatric patients start to be included."

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