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Word Generation - Unit 2.13

Focus Words

prevention | critical | pursue | alter | approach

WEEKLY PASSAGE



When Ryan Ben's uncle was in the hospital in severe pain the doctor said he had only about a month to live. Ryan's uncle asked the doctor to give him pills so he could end his life. The doctor, however, refused to provide pills to assist with suicide. She said her **approach** was to help save lives, not end them.

But people like Ryan's uncle say they don't want a long, painful death. They also worry about how much money useless treatment will cost their families. Since 1990, the idea of assisted suicide has been supported by Dr. Jack Kervorkian. According to Dr. Kervorkian, people have the right to **pursue** happiness. For people who are dying, he says, that includes the right to die when they choose.

Others are **critical** of that view. They say patients are not capable of making that choice. For one thing, patients who are in pain can't think clearly. They may just want to end the pain, not their lives. The right treatment could be all that is needed for **prevention** of the pain. Those who are against assisted suicide also worry that family members might urge a sick relative to die in order to reduce medical bills. Besides, some say, suicide is wrong. Human beings didn't create life, so they don't have the right to take it, even their own.

People who support assisted suicide say it is cruel to make suffering people live. They say healthy people have no idea how bad pain can be. They want to **alter** the

laws to make assisted suicide legal. A law legalizing assisted suicide passed in Oregon in 1997 and in Washington in 2008. In all other states a doctor who assists a suicide is considered to be guilty of murder. Where do you stand? Should doctors be allowed to assist seriously ill patients with suicide?

Should doctors be allowed to assist seriously ill patients with suicide?

FOCUS WORDS OF THE WEEK

prevention : (noun) avoidance

FORMS:

EXAMPLES OF USE:

NOTES:

critical : (adjective) against, not supporting

FORMS:

EXAMPLES OF USE:

NOTES:

pursue : (verb) to follow; to engage in

FORMS:

EXAMPLES OF USE:

NOTES:

alter : (verb) to change

FORMS:

EXAMPLES OF USE:

NOTES:

approach : (noun) method

FORMS:

EXAMPLES OF USE:

NOTES:

Should doctors be allowed to assist seriously ill patients with suicide?



PROBLEM OF THE WEEK

In 1997, Oregon passed the Death with Dignity Act (DWDA). This act allowed doctors to prescribe lethal drugs to certain seriously ill patients. Some people are glad that the law was **altered**, but others are **critical** of the change. Why do some patients decide to **pursue** the right to die?

Option 1: Each year in Oregon, some seriously ill people make a decision to die by assisted suicide. In 2006, approximately forty-eight percent of these people said they chose this **approach** because they were in pain. Medical care could not **prevent** their suffering. Which decimal is equivalent to 48%?

- A) .48
- B) 48
- C) .048
- D) .0048

Option 2: In 2006, 22 of the people who decided to die by assisted suicide in Oregon said they chose this **approach** because they were in pain. Medical care could not **prevent** their suffering. If this was approximately 48% of the total number of people who died by assisted suicide, how many people died through assisted suicide in all?

Discussion Question: Patients give different reasons for **pursuing** assisted suicide. Understanding why people want to die is **critical** to making laws about this issue. What if a high percentage of many people began using assisted suicide as a way to **prevent** high medical costs for their families? Would this **alter** your view of assisted suicide?

Should doctors be allowed to help terminally ill patients with suicide?



THINKING SCIENTIFICALLY

“I can understand that if someone is really sick and knows that they won’t get better then they might prefer to end their life painlessly and peacefully instead of suffering more treatment,” says Jorge. “But it would certainly be better if **critically** ill patients didn’t find themselves in this position in the first place.”

“I wonder if there are new advancements in medicine being **pursued** that could help to **prevent** such terrible illnesses that take peoples’ lives?” asks Lisa.

Jorge says, “Do we know anything about the specific reasons why people might choose to request physician-assisted suicide?”

“Thanks, Jorge! That’s a great question,” says Ms. Kahn. “Let’s look at this data set. This information is from Oregon, which was the first state in the U.S. to **alter** its laws to make physician-assisted suicide legal. Does this table help answer your question, Jorge?”

→ Jorge asks Lisa to look over the chart with him.

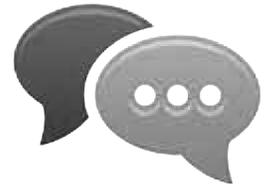
Reason for Requesting Assisted Suicide (Total number of respondents = 669)	Percent (%)
<i>Losing Autonomy</i>	91.2
<i>Less Able to Engage in Enjoyable Activities</i>	88.8
<i>Loss of Dignity</i>	82
<i>Losing Control of Bodily Functions</i>	51.6
<i>Burden on Family/Friends/Caregivers</i>	38.6
<i>Inadequate Pain Control</i>	23.5
<i>Financial Implications of Treatment</i>	2.7

 Jorge and Lisa noticed that the percentages added up to way more than 100 percent in the chart. How could that be?

 *There have been cases in which people have been told they will not recover from a disease when, in fact, they do. Would those cases affect your thoughts about this policy?*

 Lisa assumed pain would be the main reason why people who are really sick request assisted suicide. Was her assumption correct? How do you know?

Should doctors be allowed to assist seriously ill patients with suicide?



DEBATING THE ISSUE

Get ready...

Pick one of these positions (or create your own).

- A** Doctors should assist patients who are terminally ill to commit suicide.
- B** Doctors should never end a patient's life. Their job is to help their patients live, not die.
- C** Some patients may think they want to die but can't make this decision because they lack judgment. A doctor could make a terrible mistake by helping a patient who is not sure of his/her decision.
- D** A person's family should make or, at the very least, be included in the final decision. A group of caring people along with a doctor should make the final decision based on the patient's best interests.
- E** _____

Get set...

Be ready to provide evidence to back up your position during your class discussion or debate. Jot down a few quick notes:

GO!

Be a strong participant by using phrases like these.

