

MEDICALLY ASSISTED DEATH

Does a competent person suffering from a terminal illness or enduring an otherwise burdensome existence, who considers his life no longer of value but is incapable of ending it, have a right to be helped to die? Should someone for whom further medical treatment would be futile be allowed to die regardless of whether he has expressed a preference to be given all possible treatment? Do the answers to these moral questions have any legal implications? These are some of the questions that are asked and answered in this wide-ranging discussion of both the morality of medically assisted death and the justifiability of making certain instances legal. A case is offered in support of the moral and legal permissibility of specified instances of medically assisted death, along with responses to the main objections that have been levelled against it. The philosophical argument is bolstered by empirical evidence from The Netherlands and Oregon where voluntary euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide are already legal.

ROBERT YOUNG is Reader in Philosophy at La Trobe University, Melbourne, Australia.

CAMBRIDGE

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-88024-4 – Medically Assisted Death
Robert Young
Frontmatter
[More Information](#)

MEDICALLY ASSISTED DEATH

ROBERT YOUNG
La Trobe University



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-88024-4 – Medically Assisted Death
Robert Young
Frontmatter
[More Information](#)

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, São Paulo, Delhi

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge, CB2 8RU, UK
Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521706162

© Robert Young 2007

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception
and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements,
no reproduction of any part may take place without
the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2007
Reprinted 2009

Printed in the United Kingdom at the University Press, Cambridge

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

ISBN 978-0-521-88024-4 hardback
ISBN 978-0-521-70616-2 paperback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or accuracy of URLs
for external or third-party internet websites referred to in this publication, and does not
guarantee that any content on such websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.
Information regarding prices, travel timetables and other factual information given in
this work are correct at the time of first printing but Cambridge University Press
does not guarantee the accuracy of such information thereafter.

Cambridge University Press
978-0-521-88024-4 – Medically Assisted Death
Robert Young
Frontmatter
[More Information](#)

For J

Contents

<i>Acknowledgments</i>	ix
1 Introduction	1
2 A case for the legalisation of voluntary medically assisted death	15
3 Medical futility	29
4 Physician-assisted suicide	44
5 The sanctity of human life	61
6 Killing versus letting die, the doctrine of double effect, and palliative care for the dying	84
7 Professional integrity and voluntary medically assisted death	113
8 Competence and end-of-life decision making	137
9 Advance directives	155
10 Voluntary medically assisted death and slippery slope arguments	178
11 Non-voluntary euthanasia	196
12 Concluding remarks	219
<i>References</i>	222
<i>Index of English-language legal cases</i>	243
<i>Index of names and subjects</i>	244

Acknowledgments

There is by now a vast literature dealing with the issues discussed in this book. I have learned much from that literature and am very happy to acknowledge the fact here. I have also benefited from the comments of audiences at the Australian National University, Charles Sturt University, La Trobe University, the University of Melbourne and the University of Sydney where I read earlier versions of some of the chapters. It has also been my good fortune to receive valuable written feedback from friends and colleagues on earlier drafts of some of the material included in the book. So, I take this opportunity to thank: John Campbell and Norvin Richards for their comments on various draft chapters; Will Barrett, Andrew Brennan, Steve Buckle, Norva Lo and Catherine McDonald for their comments on a draft of chapter five; Michael Ashby, Alec Hyslop and David Lyons for their comments on a draft of chapter six; Arthur Kuflik and Janna Thompson for their comments on a draft of chapter seven; Steve Clarke for his comments on a draft of chapter eight; Lynda Burns for her comments on a draft of chapter ten; and Jennifer Poole for her comments on a draft of chapter eleven. Their constructive criticisms and encouragement contributed greatly to the quality of the final product. Finally, I wish to thank the anonymous readers for the Press whose detailed critiques helped me to produce a far better work than would otherwise have been the case.