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Different perspectives, same vocation

The Physician's Pledge (Declaration of Geneva)
As a member of the medical profession:
I solemnly pledge to dedicate my life to the service of humanity;
The **health and well-being of my patient** will be my first consideration;
I will **respect the autonomy and dignity of my patient**.

- When can euthanasia be a justifiable act?
- Legislation and practice on euthanasia in the Netherlands

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The Dutch Termination of Life-Act: what and when?

- Euthanasia is still a punishable offence under the Dutch Penal Code
- 2002: Dutch Termination of Life on Request and Assisted Suicide Act passed
- Bottom-up: Codification of decades of discussion in society and medical profession
- It features the Dutch: history of striving for freedom, free will and conscience, tolerance

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The 6 due care requirements for euthanasia

1. Voluntary and well-considered request
2. Unbearable suffering and no prospect of improvement
3. Patient is informed about the situation he/she is in and about the prospects
4. Conviction that no other reasonable solution for the patient's situation is available
5. One other independent physician is consulted
6. Termination of life or assisted suicide performed with due care

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Moral justification for euthanasia

- **The principle of respect for persons / respect for autonomy**
 - Acknowledgement of the autonomy and dignity of persons (cf Declaration of Geneva)
 - Right to autonomous choice to end life: NO right to be assisted by others
 - No right on euthanasia for patients, no obligation for physicians to perform euthanasia
- **The principle of compassion**

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The need for appropriate End-of-Life-Care

- Appropriate, accessible, affordable End-of-Life-Care for all people is crucial
 - Increase of palliative care in the Netherlands the last years
- Euthanasia can be the last resort in the sequence of End-of-Life-Care
 - is not a therapeutic intervention nor 'regular medical care'
- does not undermine the trust in the physician-patient relationship
 - shows respect for patient's autonomy, compassion, does not force care upon patient

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Conclusion

- Euthanasia is a complex and controversial issue: it is *not* regular care
- Is based on the principles of respect for persons/ autonomy and of compassion
- Justified if if due care requirements are met & appropriate End-of-Life-Care is available
- Transparency and supervision always needed

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Thank you for your attention

