

## Evidence behind methods used for assisting death (assisted suicide or euthanasia)

v2



Worldwide, there is no single agreed drug, drug combination or method for ending the life of a human.<sup>1</sup>



No method has been tested in a formal or observational study

Routes vary (oral, intravenous, nasogastric); drugs vary (anaesthetics, sedatives, opioids, neuromuscular blocking agents, cardiac-arrhythmia inducing chemicals, antiemetics); combinations vary (single drug or up to 5 drugs)

## References

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3. Groenewoud JH, van der Heide A, Onwuteaka-Philipson BD *et al.* Clinical problems with the performance of euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide in the Netherlands. *NEJM* 2009; **342**(8): 551-6.
4. Zimmers TA, Sheldon J, Lubarsky DA *et al.* Lethal injection for execution: chemical asphyxiation? *PLoS Medicine*, 2007; **4**(4): e156; 0646-0653.
5. American Veterinary Medical Association. AVMA guidelines for the euthanasia of animals: 2020 edition. Schaumburg: AVMA 2020.



- The commonest adverse effects with oral drugs were vomiting, muscle jerks (myoclonus) and prolonged dying<sup>2</sup>
- Only one study 30 years ago has examined the failure rate of single oral drugs for assisted dying. This has never been repeated.<sup>3</sup>
- Even lethal injections for death-row prisoners have had failures with concerns about persisting consciousness.<sup>4</sup>
- Veterinary practice does not use oral drugs for ending life in animals as they are unpredictable.<sup>5</sup>