

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

v4



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



No method has been tested in a formal or observational study



No assisted drug or method has ever been formally approved

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)



- Oregon have tried 4 different drug mixtures in the last 7 years²
- Oregon in 2020 had a 6.9% complication rate, but this excluded prolonged deaths²
- Only one study 30 years ago has examined the failure rate of oral drugs for assisted dying. This has never been repeated.³
- Even lethal injections for death-row prisoners have had failures with concerns about persisting consciousness.⁴
- Veterinary practice does not use oral drugs for ending life in animals.⁵

References

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3. Groenewoud JH, van der Heide A, Onwuteaka-Philipsen 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.