

## **Doctor-assisted suicide / Physician-assisted suicide**

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This video clip is about Doctor-assisted suicide (DAS) commonly known, in medical jurisprudence, as Physician-assisted suicide (PAS) . "Canada's Supreme Court has ruled that doctors may help patients who have severe and incurable medical conditions to die, overturning a 1993 ban". Canada is not the only country that allows "assisted suicide", some other countries like Switzerland, Colombia, The Netherlands, and Oregon also take PAS as a legal action. PAS is often confused with Euthanasia. However, there is difference between both terms. In cases of Euthanasia , a doctor administers the means of death while PAS is at the request of his patient ; in other words, the patient administers the means of death. PAS is not a new phenomenon; it has been a debatable issue for a long time. There are many legal, social, ethical, moral and religious issues related to it.

If we talk about medical ethics, DAS/PAS is contrary to the original Hippocratic Oath which clearly states, "I will give no deadly medicine to anyone if asked, nor suggest any such counsel". This Hippocratic Oath has been amended from time to time, however, it did not favour DAS/PAS ever. According to many opponents of DAS, to assist an individual in order to dismiss his life not only abolishes trust but also disturbs the ethical traditions of healthcare professionals.

Legal acts in many European and Asian countries strictly abandoned DAS/PAS stating that it is illegal for a doctor to help his patient die, all that a doctor could do best for his patients is to make maximum efforts to ease their pain without pushing them into the cruel hands of death.

### **Doctor-assisted Suicide (DAS)/ Physician-assisted suicide (PAS) in our local context:**

DAS/PAS, in our Islamic Republic of Pakistan, is condemned legally, socially, ethically and religiously. Islamic jurisprudence does not allow any person to die voluntarily. It is considered a murder or a suicide—the ultimate crimes. Taking life often causes harm to the family and society in general. Our laws also take it as an illegal act. Being Muslims, it is believed that life of any person in all situations belongs to Allah. It is He Who gives and takes life. Human beings should not interfere in this.

### **Professional obligation of a doctor towards DAS/PAS**

To get relief from pain is the utmost desire of every person who is suffering from it. However, death is not the ultimate relief from pains. Doctors must have knowledge and true understanding of this phenomenon because they may often receive such requests for hastening death. It is an important professional obligation of a doctor to respond to the needs and expectations of the patients and leave no stone unturned to offer best care to them ethically and legally. Since, in this modern era, more knowledge and skills have been discovered in the field of medicine and it is professional duty of doctors to learn them in order to relieve suffering of their patients more efficiently and sympathetically. Medical Universities/Colleges may also organize some modules/training workshops to teach the future doctors how to handle such patients psychologically.