

Publication

Counting the Cost of Denying Assisted Dying

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In this paper, we propose and defend three economic arguments for permitting assisted dying. These arguments are not intended to provide a rationale for legalising assisted suicide or euthanasia in and of themselves; rather, they are supplementary arguments that should not be neglected when considering the ethics of assisted dying. The first argument is that permitting assisted dying allows consenting patients to avoid negative quality-adjusted life years, enabling avoidance of suffering. The second argument is that the resources consumed by patients who are denied assisted dying could instead be used to provide additional (positive) quality-adjusted life years for patients elsewhere in the healthcare system who wish to continue living and to improve their quality of life. The third argument is that organ donation may be an additional potential source of quality-adjusted life years in this context. We also anticipate and provide counterarguments to several objections to our thesis. Taken together, the cumulative avoidance of negative quality-adjusted life years and gain in positive quality-adjusted life years suggest that permitting assisted dying would substantially benefit both the small population that seeks assisted suicide or euthanasia, and the larger general population. As such, denying assisted dying is a lose–lose situation for all patients.

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