

should they lose their right to decide on euthanasia or assisted suicide whenever the jurisdiction allows it. However, there is a growing concern of older people being coerced into decisions about ending their lives, not least due to their own fears of becoming a burden both for their families and the society. Manuel Martín-Carrasco will analyze how ageism can influence or model a wish to die in elderly people, especially those living with greater physical and/or mental disability. The so-called rational suicide focuses on the possibility that a healthy subject eventually decides to end his own life as a reflex of a free decision, and not within the context of a mental illness. Manuel Sánchez-Perez will discuss how difficulties in assessing the rationality of suicidal ideation include its dimensional character, together with the evidence that rationality is not always absent in depression and that the absence of depression does not imply rationality. Next, Lia Fernandes will provide an overview of years of public and parliamentary debates on euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide in Portugal. She will focus on issues regarding the exact role of psychiatrists (old age psychiatrists in particular) in the decision process, as proposed by the recently approved legislation. Finally, Javier Olivera will provide a brief overview of the recent implementation of legal access to euthanasia in Spain. A discussion of several controversial aspects of the operationalization of such a complex process will follow, including those related with conscientious objection.

Euthanasia and Ageism

Manuel Martín-Carrasco

It is clear that old people do not necessarily lose their autonomy as they age and nor should they lose their rights to make their own decisions, including the right to request euthanasia or assisted suicide, if the Law of the jurisdiction allows it. However, there are also vulnerable elderly and there is a concern that frail older people could be coerced into ending their lives because of their fears about being a burden on either their family or society. This presentation analyses how ageism can influence the formation of the desire to die in the elderly, especially in those of greater physical and/or mental frailty

Suicide and rationality

Manuel Sánchez-Perez

The so-called rational suicide focuses on the possibility that a healthy subject can make the determination to end his life in the absence of conditions on his freedom of decision, as in the context of a mental illness. Difficulties in assessing the rationality of suicidal ideation include its dimensional character and the evidence that rationality is not always absent in depression and the absence of depression does not always implies rationality.

Legislation of euthanasia in Portugal: The psychiatrist's role

Lia Fernandes, Rui Barranha, Ana R. Ferreira

The Netherlands (2001) and Belgium (2002) were pioneer countries in euthanasia legislation, and it has been progressively implemented in Luxembourg (2009), Colombia (2015), Canada (2016), the state of Victoria in Australia

(2017), and New Zealand (2021). After these, the most recent approvals of euthanasia-related legislation were Spain's Organic Law (2021), and recently, in December 2022, euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide were approved by the Portuguese parliament, following four years of discussion.

In this context, an increasing number of countries are currently regulating or considering the inclusion of euthanasia as a healthcare service, which places an urgent need to define the health professionals' and particularly psychiatrists' roles and participation in this process. Currently, these assessments are limited by the lack of scientific precision in the methods used to determine patients' decision-making capacity, conditioning this process to psychiatrists' personal beliefs.

This presentation will provide a comprehensive overview of Portuguese legislation, highlighting the psychiatrists' involvement.

The implementation of euthanasia in Spain: a one-year balance and current challenges

Javier Olivera

In Spain there have been 180 cases of euthanasia in the past year, one year since the country's Euthanasia Law came into force. The new law established that euthanasia can be carried out if it is the wish of patients who are suffering from serious, chronic and debilitating conditions or serious and incurable illness which causes intolerable suffering. Up to now, the intent to end one's life was considered a sign of psychopathology; psychiatrists are trained to treat the underlying psychiatric disorder. Assessing the mental capacity of an individual making a death wish and acting as an agent for euthanasia is contrary to traditional training of a psychiatrist. The role of psychiatrists concerning Euthanasia in Spain, particularly as far as elderly patients is concerned, is reviewed.

S19: Using narratives to improve quality of long-term care for older people

Chair: JPH Hamers,¹²

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Symposium Overview

Internationally there is a growing interest in evaluating experienced quality of care to better tailor care to resident's needs. Narratives are a promising method to achieve this, because they capture experiences, identify conflicting values, and provide rich data that can be used to learn from and improve quality of care with. In the Netherlands, narratives are becoming a more substantial element within the quality improvement cycle of nursing homes. In this symposium, four Dutch research groups will present studies on how different narratives can be used and implemented in nursing homes to achieve and maintain high quality of care for residents.

The first speaker will present how micro-narratives from care staff, residents and significant others enable the evaluation of long-term care. The second speaker will present how stakeholders improve care by reflecting together on