



Washington v. Glucksberg, 521 U.S. 702, 731, 751, 791-92 (1997)

Respondents brought a suit seeking a declaration that Washington state's ban on physician-assisted suicide was unconstitutional on its face. On review, the United States Supreme Court held that history, legal traditions, and practice support criminalizing assisted suicide. The Court held that the assisted-suicide ban was rationally related to a legitimate government interest because Washington sought to preserve human life and also uphold the integrity and ethics of the medical profession. Additionally, Washington's statute sought to protect vulnerable groups, such as the poor, elderly, and disabled from abuse, neglect, and mistakes.

The Court Reviewed the Medical Ethics of Physician-assisted Suicide Citing AMA Code of Ethics and Publications

The State also has an interest in protecting the integrity and ethics of the medical profession. In contrast to the Court of Appeals' conclusion that "the integrity of the medical profession would [not] be threatened in any way by [physician-assisted suicide]," 79 F.3d, at 827, the American Medical Association, like many other medical and physicians' groups, has concluded that "physician-assisted suicide is fundamentally incompatible with the physician's role as healer." American Medical Association, Code of Ethics § 2.211 (1994); see Council on Ethical and Judicial Affairs, Decisions Near the End of Life, 267 JAMA 2229, 2233 (1992) ("The societal risks of involving physicians in medical interventions to cause patients' deaths is too great").

The illusory character of any differences in intent or causation is confirmed by the fact that the American Medical Association unequivocally endorses the practice of terminal sedation--the administration of sufficient dosages of pain-killing medication to terminally ill patients to protect them from excruciating pain even when it is clear that the time of death will be advanced.

Medical technology, we are repeatedly told, makes the administration of pain-relieving drugs sufficient, except for a very few individuals for whom the ineffectiveness of pain control medicines can mean, not pain, but the need for sedation which can end in a coma. Brief for National Hospice Organization 8; Brief for the American Medical Association (AMA) et al. as *Amici Curiae* 6