

Assisted Suicide Deaths Are Not Peaceful as Patients Take High Doses of Experimental Drugs Which Generate Complications

- Assisted suicide is promoted as a patient taking a pill and dying a peaceful death. In reality, dosage has evolved from taking 100 capsules of secobarbital, a barbiturate, to use of experimental drug cocktails. Experimentation with combinations of drugs is explained as “research” that, in fact, has not been approved by any ethics review committee like an “Institutional Review Board” (IRB), which appears to violate research ethics standards.
- According to the *Atlantic*: “No medical association oversees aid in dying, and no government committee helps fund the research...The doctors’ work {to experiment with drugs which kill patients} has taken place on the margins of traditional science. Despite their principled intentions, it’s a part of medicine that’s still practiced in the shadows.”¹

Drug Cocktails Evolve as Patients Experience Increased Times to Die

DDMP2

- DDMP2 is a combination of diazepam, digoxin, morphine sulfate and propranolol.
- Researchers have described [DDMP 2](#) as “blue-whale-sized doses.....And the mixture tastes extremely bitter. ‘Imagine taking two bottles of aspirin, crushing it up, and mixing it in less than half a cup of water or juice.’”²
- In Oregon in 2020, the median time until death was [longer for the DDMP2 compound](#) (85 min) than for secobarbital (25 min).³ The drug cocktail is taken in liquid form and is ingested orally or through a tube.

DDMA

- [DDMA was introduced](#) as a combination of diazepam, digoxin, morphine sulfate and amitriptyline. In Oregon in 2020, DDMA was used for 303 patients and where data is available, the time to achieve death ranged from one minute to 19 hours.⁴

DDMA-Ph

- Most recently, phenobarbital was added to the previous four drugs. According to the 2021 Oregon report: “All drug combinations have shown longer median times until death than the barbiturates, secobarbital and pentobarbital, which are no longer readily available.”⁵

General Complications from Lethal Drugs Used in Assisted Suicide Deaths

- According to *Kaiser Health News*: “The first Seconal alternative turned out to be too harsh, [burning patients’ mouths and throats](#), causing some to scream in pain.” “The second drug mix, used 67 times, has led to deaths that [stretched out hours in some patients](#) – and up to 31 hours in one case...the next longest 29 hours, the third longest 16 hours and some 8 hours in length.”⁶
- There is indication that amitriptyline causes esophageal burning with instructions that the clinician “Immediately administer sorbet to cool down the burning.”⁷
- According to *Anaesthesia*: “However, for all these forms of assisted dying, there appears to be a relatively high incidence of vomiting (up to 10%), prolongation of death (up to 7 days), and re-awakening from coma (up to 4%), constituting failure of unconsciousness. This raises a concern that some [deaths may be inhumane](#)...”⁸

1. <https://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2019/01/medical-aid-in-dying-medications/580591/>

2. The Atlantic, Jennie Dear “The Doctors Who Invented a New Way to Help People Die,” January 22nd, 2019 <https://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2019/01/medical-aid-in-dying-medications/580591/>

3. <https://www.oregon.gov/oha/PH/PROVIDERPARTNERRESOURCES/EVALUATIONRESEARCH/DEATHWITHDIGNITYACT/Documents/year23.pdf>, page 16

4. <https://www.oregon.gov/oha/PH/PROVIDERPARTNERRESOURCES/EVALUATIONRESEARCH/DEATHWITHDIGNITYACT/Documents/year23.pdf>, page 16

5. <https://www.oregon.gov/oha/PH/PROVIDERPARTNERRESOURCES/EVALUATIONRESEARCH/DEATHWITHDIGNITYACT/Documents/year24.pdf>, pages 8-9

6. *Kaiser Health News*, “Docs in Northwest Tweak Aid-In-Dying Drugs to Prevent Prolonged Deaths”, February 21, 2017

7. <https://www.acamaid.org/amitriptylineburning/>

8. Sinmyee, S., Pandit, V.J., Pascual, J.M., Dahan, A., Heidegger, T., et al. (2019). Legal and ethical implications of defining an optimum means of achieving unconsciousness in assisted dying. *Anaesthesia*, 74,557-559.