# ASSISTED SUICIDE ABUSES HURT PATIENTS:

# THEY CAN AND DO HAPPEN

Assisted suicide proponents vociferously proclaim that in all of the years assisted suicide has been legal in a small number of states, not a single instance of abuse has been recorded. This is patently false, as indicated in the following abuse cases.

### Abuse: Patients with Non-Terminal Mental Health Conditions Qualify

State reports in Oregon, California, and Colorado reveal that anorexia, a treatable eating disorder, has been a qualifying condition for lethal drugs on dozens of occasions. One study identified two of the patients as young women.[1]

### Abuse: Jane Rescued from Prescribed Assisted Suicide Drugs

In 2020, Jane was diagnosed with "terminal anorexia" at age 28 and approved for assisted suicide drugs. Her father fought for and gained guardianship and had the lethal drugs destroyed. Jane recovered from anorexia and lived a full life until she died at age 32 from complications of long-term malnutrition.

### Abuse: Melissa Offered Unrequested Assisted Suicide Drugs

Melissa Ortiz, a lifelong wheelchair user, was given a terminal diagnosis while in the hospital. Alone in her room, a nurse came to talk to her about assisted suicide even though Melissa never asked about it. Melissa believes her disability factored into the offer of the drugs.

### Abuse: Dementia Patient Cody Sontag Died by Assisted Suicide

Cody Sontag, an Oregon woman in the early stages of Alzheimer's disease, qualified for lethal drugs simply because she chose to stop eating and drinking. She had no terminal condition and her malnutrition was treatable.[2]

### Abuse: Challenges Face Emergency Personnel as They Encounter Assisted Suicide Patients

In Colorado, a 35-year-old man ingested lethal drugs intended for an older man and needed emergency treatment. Emergency personnel entered a confusing scene where two people were unconscious and unresponsive and they had to decide who to save. [3]

### Abuse: Non-Terminal Patient Sarah Repeatedly Offered Assisted Suicide Drugs

Sarah Barton's grandmother was placed in a Vermont care facility because of a fall. Even though she was not terminally ill, she was repeatedly told about a new law where she could kill herself with lethal drugs.[4]

### Abuse: Barbara and Randy Denied Coverage for Lifesaving Treatment and Offered Unrequested Assisted Suicide Drugs Instead

Barbara Wagner and Randy Stroup requested coverage from the Oregon Health Plan for coverage of treatment for cancer. Both received a letter from OHP denying treatment coverage but offering payment for assisted suicide drugs, even though neither of them requested them. [5, 6]

### Abuse: Stephanie Initially Denied Lifesaving Coverage, Told She Could Have Lethal Drugs

Stephanie Packer Aguayo, a Latina wife and mother of seven, was diagnosed in 2012 with scleroderma and given three years to live. Her doctors prescribed an expensive new treatment for which her insurance company denied coverage. When asked, she was told they would cover assisted suicide drugs for a co-pay of a mere $1.20. [7]

### Abuse: Patients of Dr. Callister Denied Coverage of Lifesaving Drugs and Offered Unrequested Assisted Suicide Drugs Instead

Dr. Brian Callister asked for treatment coverage for two patients, one in California and the other in Oregon. The coverage was denied and the companies offered coverage of assisted suicide drugs, even though neither Dr. Callister nor the patients requested them. [8]

### Abuse: Dementia Patient Kate Dies after Daughter Doctor Shops for Assisted Suicide Drugs

Kate Cheney suffered from dementia. Her daughter "doctor-shopped" until she found a doctor to declare her mother competent. Kate died by assisted suicide drugs, despite a psychologist noting "choices may be influenced by her family's wishes and her daughter, Erika, may be somewhat coercive." [9]

### Abuse: Caretaker Defrauds Thomas after His Death from Assisted Suicide

Thomas Middleton was diagnosed with Lou Gehrig's disease and moved into the home of Tami Sawyer after making her his estate trustee. He died by assisted suicide later that month. Two days after Middleton died, Sawyer sold his home and deposited $90,000 into her own account. A federal investigation into real estate fraud finally exposed this abuse. The Oregon agency overseeing the assisted suicide law never noticed this blatant abuse of Middleton. [10]

### Abuse: Depressed, Suicidal Michael Deemed Eligible for Assisted Suicide Drugs

After decades of depression and suicide attempts, Michael Freeland saw a doctor about assisted suicide drugs. The physician didn't think a psychiatric consultation was necessary. Freeland managed to find improved medical and suicide prevention services and lived two years past his terminal diagnosis. [11]

### Abuse: Disabled Patrick "Helped" to Take Assisted Suicide Drugs

Patrick Matheny requested assisted suicide drugs but was unable to self-administer as the law requires. With no oversight, a third party "helped" Patrick ingest the drugs. No prosecution occurred for this blatant violation. [12]


1. pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/35168671/
2. agsjournals.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/jgs.18785
3. jems.com/patient-care/emergency-medical-care/death-with-dignity-when-the-medical-aid-in-dying-cocktail-gets-into-the-wrong-hands/
4. youtube.com/watch?v=ezWp5TC7sOY
5. youtube.com/watch?v=2rrNVesLuFg
6. youtube.com/watch?v=fKOT3oujULI
7. facebook.com/cbcnetwork/videos/10154641061607079/
8. youtube.com/watch?v=CWrpr_5e4RY&rco=1
9. dredf.org/some-oregon-and-washington-state-assisted-suicide-abuses-and-complications/
10. oregonlive.com/hp_business/2011/07/ex-broker_tami_sawyer_of_bend_arrested_on_theft_charges.html
11. dredf.org/some-oregon-and-washington-state-assisted-suicide-abuses-and-complications/
12. dredf.org/some-oregon-and-washington-state-assisted-suicide-abuses-and-complications/


PATIENTS RIGHTS ACTION FUND