

Matters of death.

What you need to know:

- The role of the family / community in caring for the terminally ill and elderly.
 - The work of homes for the elderly and of hospices.
 - The use of life support machines and artificial means of supporting life.
 - Definition of death.
 - What is meant by the quality and sanctity of life?
 - Self-determinism in relation to euthanasia and suicide.
 - Active / passive euthanasia.
 - Should euthanasia be legalised?
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The elderly:

100 years ago, only 5% of Britain's population was aged 65 or over. Now it has risen to almost 20% and it is still rising. Just because the age of the population is rising does not mean the elderly are not facing problems. Some of these include:

- Failing health.
- Financial difficulties.
- Loneliness.

In generations gone by the extended family took care of the elderly. Most generations would have lived in the same house. Today we tend to live in nuclear families. The grandparents may live miles away and caring for them could be a problem.

The community provides help in the following way:

Care schemes: Includes home help and meals on wheels.

Warden control: residents have their own independence but help is there When it is needed.

Social services: Runs residential homes for those with disabilities.

Private homes: 24 hour nursing care.

Hospices:

Those suffering from terminal illness may be cared for in a hospice. Their aim is to relieve the suffering and control their symptoms in a more controlled way. This is known as palliative care. The emphasis is to give the patient a good quality of life in their final days.

In the UK there are 2,000 Macmillan nurses and 300 doctors working in hospices. They not only offer palliative care but they also offer support to the family.

Look on the Internet to find out more information on:

Dame Cecily Saunders:

<http://www.brooks.ac.uk/schools/bms/medical.synopsis/saunders/html!>

Macmillan Nurses:

<http://www.macmillan.or.uk/aboutmacmillan/>

Christianity:

Treats the elderly with respect. This is due to the commandment 'Honour thy mother and thy father' (Exodus 20:12). The Church realises that the elderly have both experience and wisdom. Many of the elderly need love and care. The Church can provide this by visitors from the Church going to see the elderly in care homes.

Islam:

In Islam it is seen as an honour and a blessing for spiritual growth to look after the elderly. Serving parents is seen as a duty second to prayer. Not to care for the elderly is seen as disrespectful/

Definitions:

Death: Occasions where the heart stops beating and the lungs stop Working.
This is known as cardio - respiratory death.

Sanctity: Life is sacred and is a gift from God.
Therefore life should be valued and protected.

Quality: This is more important than the length of life.
Poor quality = suffering / illness/ poverty and loneliness.

Life after death:

Religion:	Teaching:
Christianity.	The soul will be judged on the Day of judgement. Believers will join God in heaven. Roman Catholics believe in purgatory . This is between heaven and hell and is a place for the soul to be cleansed.
Islam.	Look forward to the resurrection of the body. The soul enters into eternal life. They will be taken by Aza'il (death) to wait in barzakh before going to Akhirah (day of judgement). Each soul will be judged and go where they deserve. Non - believes go to johannam (hell).

Suicide:

The term is used to describe the act of killing the self. Nearly 150,000 people try to kill themselves in the UK per year. Over 6000 results in death. Three quarters of these are men.

Euthanasia:

The word comes from the Greek words 'eu' and 'thantos'. Together they mean a 'gentle (good) death'. It is some times known as mercy killing. It is illegal in the UK but is permitted in Holland, Switzerland and Belgium.

There are various forms of euthanasia. They include:

Passive: Withholding or taking away treatment with the intention of ending a life.

Active: The doctor will deliberately intervene to end a life.

Voluntary: Means helping someone to die at their request due to an incurable illness.

Involuntary: Someone else makes the decision, but the patient has not given their consent.

The Voluntary Euthanasia society (VES) is a pressure group who takes the view that people should have a say in when they end their lives. They suggest that their members make a 'living will' to declare that they do not want to be resuscitated on entry to hospital if it is required to save the life.

It is important to remember that in 1953 Chad Varah (an Anglican vicar) started the 'Samaritans'. This is a group of people who listen to those who are in despair and they try to help them through their problems.

(MAKE SURE THAT YOU INCLUDE YOUR NOTES ON THE SAMARITANS HERE FOR FURTHER DETAIL - YOU MAY NEED THIS FOR THE EXAM).

Arguments for euthanasia:	Arguments against euthanasia:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Death with dignity is better than a long death.• 'Happy release' for the relations.• Doctors are aware when there is no hope of recovery.• An injection is quick and humane.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• It is a form of murder.• All have a right to life.• It is playing God.• It goes against the Hippocratic Oath that forbids killing a patient.

Christian views:

In Acts 17:26 Christians are told that God has given a fixed term for life to begin and to end. Therefore any form of suicide and euthanasia is wrong. Within the Roman Catholic Church both ways are classed as murder. Passive euthanasia may be justified if it brings some relief.

Islam:

In the Qur'an 53, Muslims can see that Allah has fixed the time span for all things. Again suicide and euthanasia is wrong. All life needs to be 'pure' for the afterlife.

REMEMBER:

When it comes to the exam, when you are asked for a definition, make sure that you follow it up with an example.

The main cases you need to know about for the exam are:

Tony Bland:

<http://www.spucscotland.org/education/students/euthanasia/tonyblandpvs.html>

Dian Pretty:

<http://www.justice4diane.org.uk>

Use these two cases to see the situations for each of them as well as the outcome with relation to the law.