

## Death with Dignity Act In the State of Oregon The Law & Lessons Learned



## Dying with Indignity

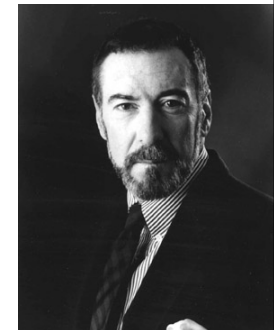


## A Look Back at Thirteen Year's of Oregon's Law



Presenter: George Eighmey,  
former Executive Director of  
Compassion & Choices of Oregon

The day I learned I was terminally ill and that nothing could be done to palliate my pain, I decided I wanted to live as long as I could, as best as I was able, and to die with dignity as I had lived."



Steve Mason, poet laureate of the Vietnam Veterans Association who died May 29, 2005, one week after testifying in support of Oregon's law before the California State Legislature.

### **Summary of Oregon's Death with Dignity Act**

- Must be adult resident
- 2 MDs Determine Terminal
- May Require Psych. Eval.
- Must Make 3 Requests
- Must Self Administer

### **From 1998 through 2010**

525 Oregonians Ingested a Legally Prescribed Lethal Dose of Medication

818 Prescriptions Were Written

This corresponds to 13.1 DWDA deaths per 10,000 total deaths.

### **Participants were:**

- Between 25 and 96 years of age, median age of 71
- Caucasian (97.6%),
- Well-educated (44.2% had at least a baccalaureate degree)
- Had cancer (80.8%)
- Had ALS (8%)

### **Reasons why people use the law:**

1. Loss of autonomy
2. Less able to enjoy activities
3. Fear of loss of autonomy

### **Least important reasons:**

1. Depression
2. Lack of social support, and
3. Fear of being a financial burden.

Linda Ganzini, MD, et al. New England Journal of Medicine, August 2002, 347:582-588

## Unfounded Concerns As To Effect Of Law ON Vulnerable Groups.

Journal of Medial Ethics 2007; 33:591-597

- Women – 46.3%  
Men 53.7%
- 98.4% had health insurance
- 92.9% high school +
- Only 2.5% had financial concerns
- 88.7% enrolled in hospice
- 97.9% Caucasian,
- No person may use the law based solely upon a disability
- 1.1% were 18-34 year olds and 12% were 85+ who used the law.

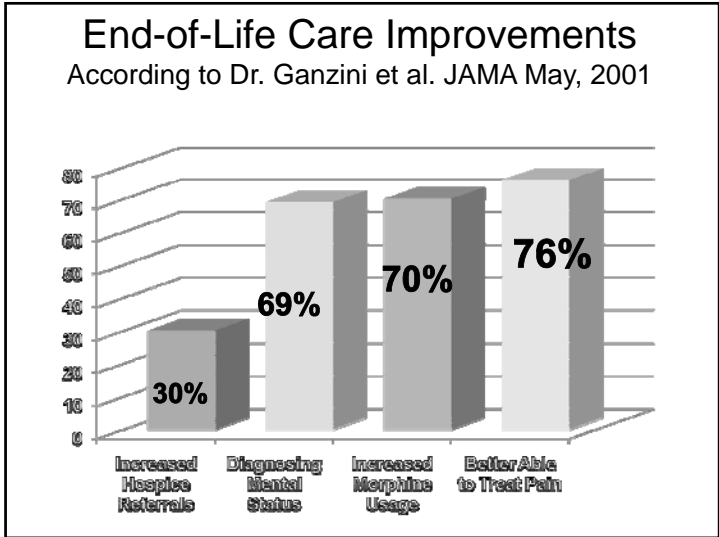


“Oregon has proven that good things happen when the law and compassion come together.”


Barbara Roberts,  
Former Governor of Oregon

## Oregon End-of-Life Care

- Consistently ranks in the top “Best Places to Retire.”
- One of the highest utilizations rates of hospice.
- Has the highest rate of “in-home” deaths. (37.9% v. US average of 23.2%)  
(Ann Jackson, former ED OHA)




“It’s a great privilege to honor end of life choices of my patients and to help in this final way.”



Nicholas Gideonse, MD  
OHSU Professor of Family Medicine

### QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS



Thank you for your invitation. Please contact me with your questions and comments at [geighmey@aol.com](mailto:geighmey@aol.com) or 1524 SE Poplar Ave., Portland, OR 97214 or 503-233-9313