

Euthanasia

Approved 2005

The NZMA is opposed to both the concept and practice of euthanasia and doctor assisted suicide.

Euthanasia, that is the act of deliberately ending the life of a patient, even at the patient's request or at the request of close relatives, is unethical.¹

Doctor-assisted suicide, like euthanasia, is unethical.²

The NZMA however encourages the concept of death with dignity and comfort, and strongly supports the right of patients to decline treatment, or to request pain relief, and supports the right of access to appropriate palliative care.

In supporting patients' right to request pain relief, the NZMA accepts that the proper provision of such relief, even when it may hasten the death of the patient, is not unethical.

This NZMA position is not dependent on euthanasia and doctor-assisted suicide remaining unlawful. Even if they were to become legal, or decriminalised, the NZMA would continue to regard them as unethical.

(Note: this policy replaces the earlier Euthanasia policy of 1996, which was reconfirmed in 2001.)

¹ World Medical Association Declaration on Euthanasia, October 1987.

² World Medical Association Statement on Physician Assisted Suicide, September 1992.