

Death beyond the Alps: a comparative qualitative analysis of end of life care and assisted suicide in two neighboring countries, Italy and Switzerland

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Since 2019, assisted suicide (AS) in Swiss public hospitals has surged, contrasting its previous prevalence in private clinics like EXIT. Article 115 of the Swiss Criminal Code refrains from penalizing AS driven by altruistic motives. In this transition, the role of hospital liaison psychiatrists gains significance, ensuring authentic intent among AS-eligible patients and excluding major psychiatric disorders. Ethical debates around AS, distinct from euthanasia, present uncertainties for multidisciplinary end-of-life teams. Our project's core objective is comparing legal systems and healthcare frameworks, spotlighting the surge in AS cases among Italian patients in Switzerland, causing political controversies. Our focus extends beyond objective disparities in nearby regions' hospital protocols, delving into subjective challenges faced by healthcare professionals in Italy and Switzerland. Profoundly different ethical dilemmas emerge, despite geographic proximity, as these procedures unfold in relatively close countries. The juxtaposition of legal, ethical, and healthcare aspects illuminates the evolving landscape of assisted suicide within Swiss healthcare, prompting broader reflections on end-of-life practices in neighboring nations.