Assisted Suicide

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There is no constitutional right to physician-assisted suicide says the US Supreme Court. Most US states have laws against it, but states can also allow it, as Oregon has done. Other states are considering legalisation. Yet there has been very little guidance offered to date about its practice. This book fills that void. Its chapters, by a diverse group of experts - some for, some against - provide a framework for thinking about what assisted suicide, particularly physician-assisted suicide, is and how its legalised practice might be guided. The book does not take a position on the morality or wisdom of legalising assisted suicide. That is an important continuing debate. But because physician-assisted suicide is now taking place, the more pressing concerns are, in many ways, those pertaining to its implementation and the lessons to be drawn from it. This book tries to find common ground on those real world concerns. A number of questions are asked and answered, among them: What is assisted suicide? Is physician-assisted suicide different from refusal of treatment? Are there alternatives to assisted suicide? How useful are currently available guidelines for physician-assisted suicide? Who should have access to what? Does assisted suicide necessarily mean physician-assisted suicide? Can it be effectively and meaningfully regulated? How should physicians respond to requests for assisted suicide. Assisted suicide is one of the issues in medicine and bio-ethics that will define who we are and want to be as

individuals and as a society. This book takes a hard look at how to keep physician-assisted suicide rare, alternatives to the practice, the implications for the patient-physician relationship, who should write guidelines, and how to regulate it and determine safeguards to keep it voluntary and an option of last resort.

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