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Dutch doctor reprimanded for 'asking family to hold down euthanasia patient'



Prosecutors will announce after the summer if the doctor will face criminal prosecution. CREDIT: EYEEM



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By **Senay Boztas**, IN AMSTERDAM
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A doctor has been formally reprimanded by the Dutch medical complaints board for carrying out euthanasia on a 74-year-old woman with dementia, despite her resistance.

The woman refused a cup of coffee containing a sedative and when she struggled, the doctor asked her husband and daughter (<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/01/28/panel-clears-dutch-doctor-asked-family-hold-patient-carried/>) to hold her down so she could insert a drip containing the lethal injection.

The case is the first time since the Dutch euthanasia law was passed in 2002 that a practitioner has been formally censured. According to the Dutch NOS broadcaster, the public prosecutor will announce after the summer if the doctor will face criminal prosecution.

The Regional Euthanasia Review Committees said earlier this year that parts of the euthanasia procedure, which occurred in 2016, had crossed ethical boundaries and the case was referred to the complaints board.

The woman, whose own mother had spent 12 years in a nursing home with dementia before she died, had made a "living will" saying she did not want to go to a home and wanted to choose the time of her own end.

But she was admitted into a care home in her last seven weeks, where she was angry, stressed and tearful.

She would wander the home at night looking for her husband, according to the euthanasia review committee's report. She had been afraid of serious dementia, and while still at home had frequently verbalised the wish to die.

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Photo: Getty

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But the Dutch medical complaints board said that her will was contradictory, and that although the woman said she wanted to die on some days, on others she did not. It found that the doctor should have discussed the fact that a sedative was put in her coffee – which did not happen – and only carried out euthanasia if she agreed.

Some doctors have reacted positively to the ruling, saying it provides more clarity in a complex area. Bert Keizer, a doctor who works for the End of Life Clinic, told NOS: "At last there is clarity. But for people with a living will who want to die if they have advanced dementia, this is a negative ruling. If they can no longer indicate that they still want to die, they will have to drink the cup [of sedative] otherwise they will not receive euthanasia."

Dutch prosecutors are investigating five other cases of euthanasia suspected of potentially breaking the strict rules, NOS reported.

Cases of euthanasia for patients with dementia and psychiatric issues (<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/05/11/netherlands-sees-sharp-increase-in-people-choosing-euthanasia-du/>) have been controversial in the Netherlands, although they still represent just 2.6 per cent and 1.3 per cent respectively of the 6585 cases of assisted deaths in 2017.

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