

Assisted Suicide and Canadian Law

Canada still has not come to a decision on the need for legalizing euthanasia or assisted suicide. A woman named Sue Rodriguez brought it out into open to become one of Canada's famous court debates. In February of 1994, she ended her life with the assistance of her doctor. She suffered from a terminal illness called ALS (a.k.a. amyotrophic lateral sclerosis or Lou Gehrig's disease). The disease progressively worsens until it robs the individual of all their abilities (like walking, control of body movement, swallowing and breathing) until they are totally dependent on mechanical devices to survive.

Before she ended her life, she brought the debate over assisted suicide and the right to die to the Supreme Court of British Columbia (which was denied) and then to the British Columbia Court of Appeal which was lost. She fought though for the right to change the laws of assisted suicide and have the right to choose when she would die.

Sue Rodriguez is an example of the need for the Canadian government to decide on the laws surrounding this issue. In this paper I will explain euthanasia or assisted suicide, the laws surrounding the issue and some of the arguments for and against it. Later I will discuss the role of the social worker in regards to assisted suicide and the health care setting.