

991 used oregon's physician-aided dying law 1998 to 2015

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(HealthDay)—Fewer than 1,000 residents have followed through since

Oregon became the first state to permit physician-aided dying in 1997, according to a report published online April 6 in *JAMA Oncology*.

Using data from the Oregon Health Authority from 1998 through 2015, Charles Blanke, M.D., a professor of medicine at the Oregon Health & Science University's Knight Cancer Institute in Portland, and colleagues found that 1,545 prescriptions for lethal medication were written. But, less than two-thirds of these [patients](#)—991 in all—used the drugs.

Of those who took their life, men slightly outnumbered women. Patients' ages in 2015 ranged from 25 to 102, with more than half older than 71. While cancer accounted for the overwhelming majority of cases, [amyotrophic lateral sclerosis](#), lung disease, heart disease, and HIV also led to [physician-assisted death](#). For nine out of 10, losing autonomy and not enjoying activities of [daily living](#) were the primary reasons for wanting to die. Loss of dignity led to 78.7 percent of the overall deaths, while uncontrolled pain was cited by one-quarter of patients. The researchers said that 5.3 percent of the patients underwent a psychiatric evaluation to assess their competence in making end-of-life decisions.

Also, "contrary to claims that it might be pushed onto the poorly educated or disadvantaged—mostly white, older, college-educated people used the law," Blanke told *HealthDay*. For example, nearly all were white. More than 9 out of 10 were receiving hospice care and had [health](#) insurance. And 70.8 percent had at least some college education. Most patients died at home. On average, they fell into a coma 5 minutes after taking the drug and died within 25 minutes.

More information: [Abstract/Full Text \(subscription or payment may be required\)](#)

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