

# Report evaluates results of Oregon's Death with Dignity Act

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Oregon's Death with Dignity Act is the longest-running physician-aided dying program in the United States.

A new article published by *JAMA Oncology* from Charles Blanke, M.D., chairman of SWOG, a Portland-based worldwide network of researchers who design and conduct [cancer trials](#), evaluates the usage and effectiveness of the law, which went into effect in 1997.

The article used data collected on the law to measure the number of deaths from self-administered lethal medication compared with the number of [prescriptions](#) written. The authors reviewed reports from 1998 to 2015 from the Oregon Health Authority, which collects compliance and prescribing information.

The authors report a total of 1,545 prescriptions were written and 991 patients (64 percent) died by using legally prescribed lethal medication.

The number of prescriptions that were written increased annually from 24 in 1998 to 218 in 2015. Most of the 991 patients who used lethal medication had cancer (77 percent). The most common reasons for physician-aided dying (PAD) were that activities of [daily living](#) were no longer enjoyable, as well as losses of autonomy and dignity, according to the article.

"We believe PAD is a promising area for formal, prospective research. Capturing more information on [patients](#) considering it (e.g. how many

had an underlying diagnosis of depression, whether tumors were primary or recurrent, and time since diagnosis) would be of great interest in guiding cancer care delivery research," the article concludes.

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