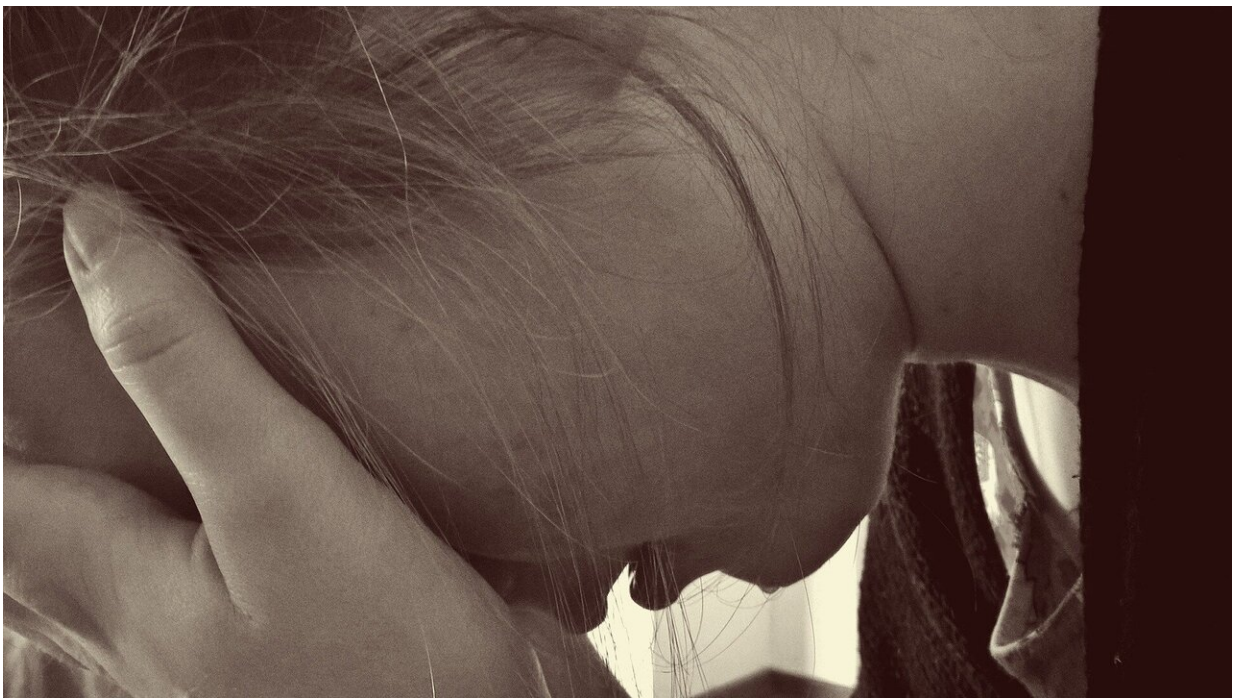


Does access to assisted suicide affect trends of conventional suicide among patients with cancer?

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An analysis published in *Cancer Medicine* reveals the trends of self-initiated deaths—including assisted suicide (AS) and conventional suicide (CS)—in Switzerland over a 20-year period, focusing on people who suffered from cancer. Although supporters of assisted dying state

that access to AS should lead to a reduction in violent CS, the study's findings do not confirm this assumption. The situations and motivations for cancer-associated CS seem to be clearly different from those for cancer-related AS.

In Switzerland, assisting in a [suicide](#) is not punishable as long as it does not serve selfish motives. In this analysis of data from 1999–2018, investigators found that cancer was the most often listed principal disease for AS: 3,580 people with cancer died by AS, representing 41.0% of AS cases. Cancer was listed in only a small minority of CS cases (832 people, representing 3.8% of CS cases).

There was an approximate doubling of AS cases every 5 years among patients with cancer. Also, the percentage of cancer-associated AS in relationship with all cancer-associated deaths increased over time to 2.3% in 2014–2018. The numbers of cancer-associated CS showed a [downward trend](#) from 1999–2003 and were stable through 2009–2018.

"Obviously, the situations and motivations for cancer-associated CS seem to be clearly different from those for [cancer](#)-related AS," said corresponding author Uwe Güth, MD, of the University of Basel.

More information: Conventional and Assisted Suicide in Switzerland: Insights into a Divergent Development Based on Cancer-associated Self-initiated Deaths, *Cancer Medicine* (2023). [DOI: 10.1002/cam4.6323](https://doi.org/10.1002/cam4.6323)

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