

Death with Dignity Act In the State of Oregon, USA Methods in Oregon: Lessons Learned



Dying with Indignity



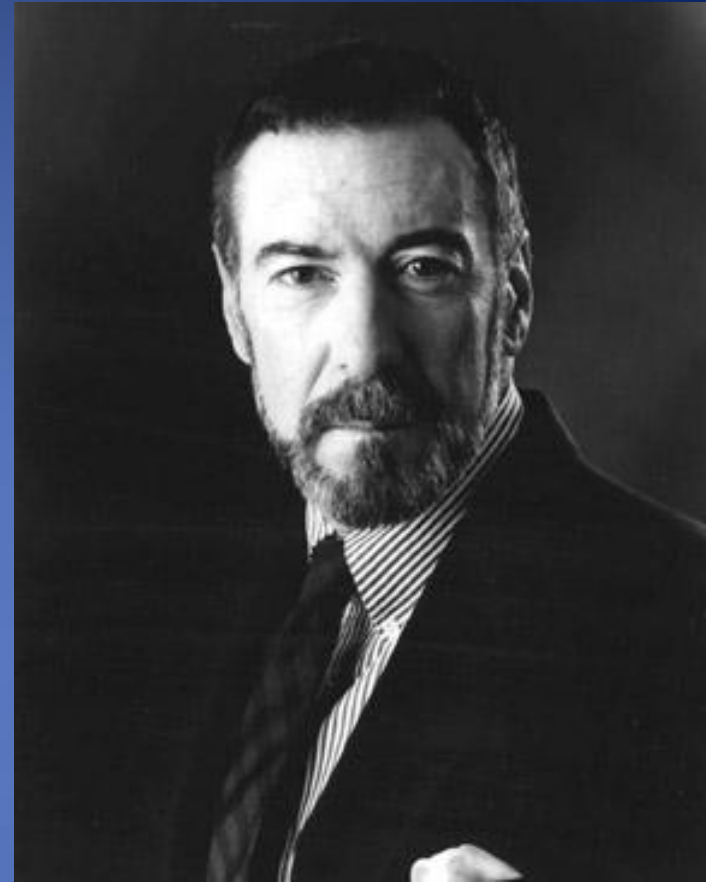
09.25.09
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The Miami Herald

A Look Back at Twelve Year's of Oregon's Law

Presenter: George Eighmey,
former Executive Director for 12 years of
Compassion & Choices of Oregon

The day I learned I was terminally ill and that nothing could be done to palliate my pain, I decided I wanted to live as long as I could, as best as I was able, and to die with dignity as I had lived.”



Steve Mason, poet laureate of the Vietnam Veterans Association who died May 29, 2005, one week after testifying in support of Oregon's law before the California State Legislature.

Summary of Oregon's Death with Dignity Act

- Must be adult resident
- 2 MDs Determine Terminal
- May Require Psych. Eval.
- Must Make 3 Requests
- Must Self Administer

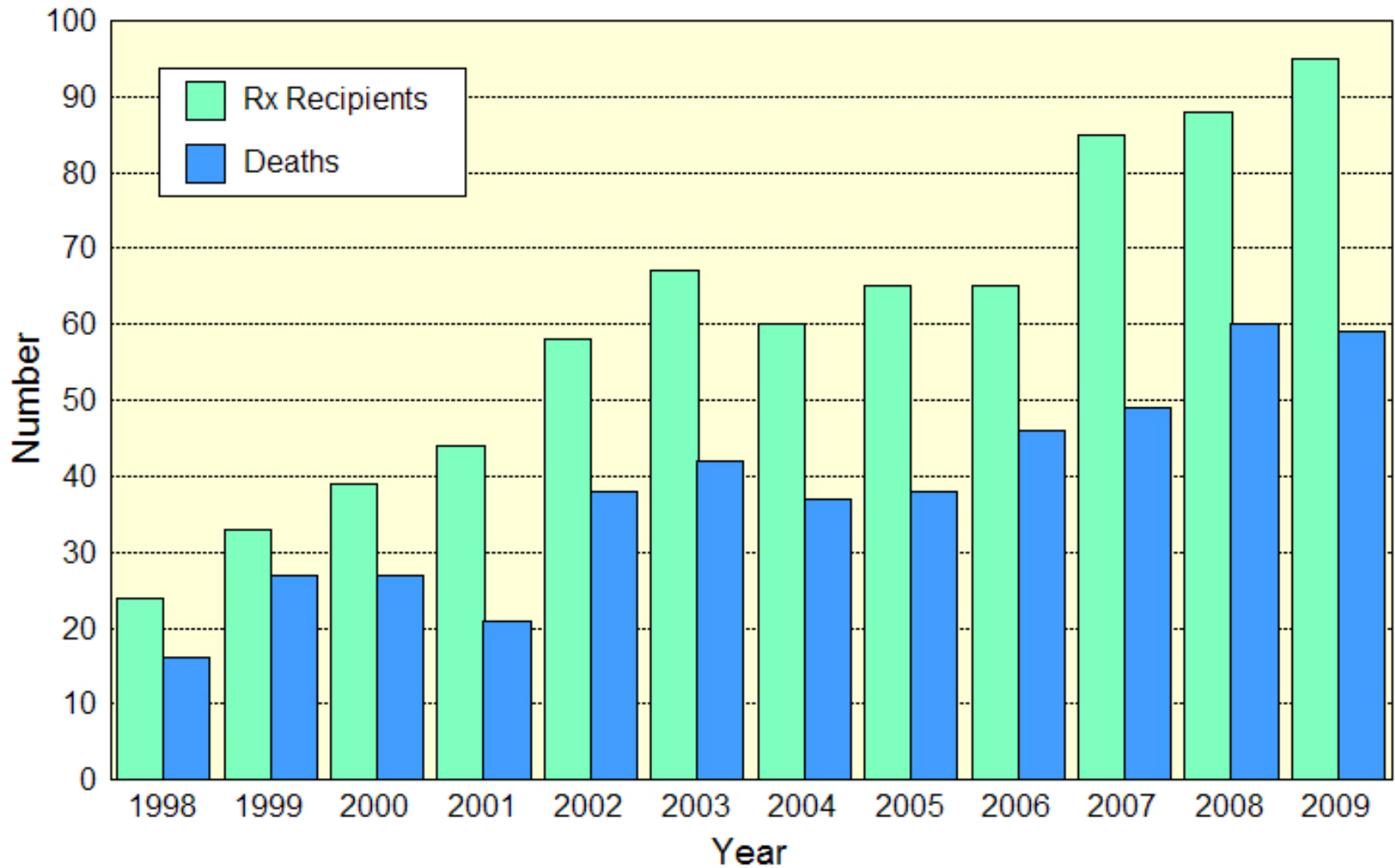
From 1998 through 2009

460 Oregonians Ingested a Legally
Prescribed Lethal Dose of Medication

722 Prescriptions Were Written

This corresponds to 12.8 DWDA deaths
per 10,000 total deaths.

Number of DWDA Prescription Recipients and Deaths, by Year, Oregon, 1998-2009



<http://oregon.gov/DHS/ph/pas/index.shtml>

Participants were:

- Between 25 and 96 years of age, median age was 71
- Caucasian (97.6%),
- Well-educated (44.4% had at least a baccalaureate degree)
- Had cancer (81.1%)
- Had ALS (7.6%)

Reasons why people use the law:

1. Loss of autonomy
2. Less able to enjoy activities
3. Fear of loss of autonomy

Least important reasons:

1. Depression
2. Lack of social support, and
3. Fear of being a financial burden.

Linda Ganzini, MD, et al. New England Journal of Medicine, August 2002, 347:582-588

Unfounded Concerns As To Effect Of Law On Vulnerable Groups.

Journal of Medical Ethics 2007; 33:591-597

➤ **Women – 47.0%**
Men 53.0%

➤ **98.7% had health insurance**

➤ **92.8% high school**

➤ **2.6% had financial concerns**

➤ **88.2% enrolled in hospice**

➤ **97.6% Caucasian,**

➤ **No person may use the law based solely upon a disability**

➤ **1.3% were 18-34 year olds and 11.1% were 85+ who used the law.**



“Oregon has proven that good things happen when the law and compassion come together.”

Barbara Roberts,
Former Governor of Oregon

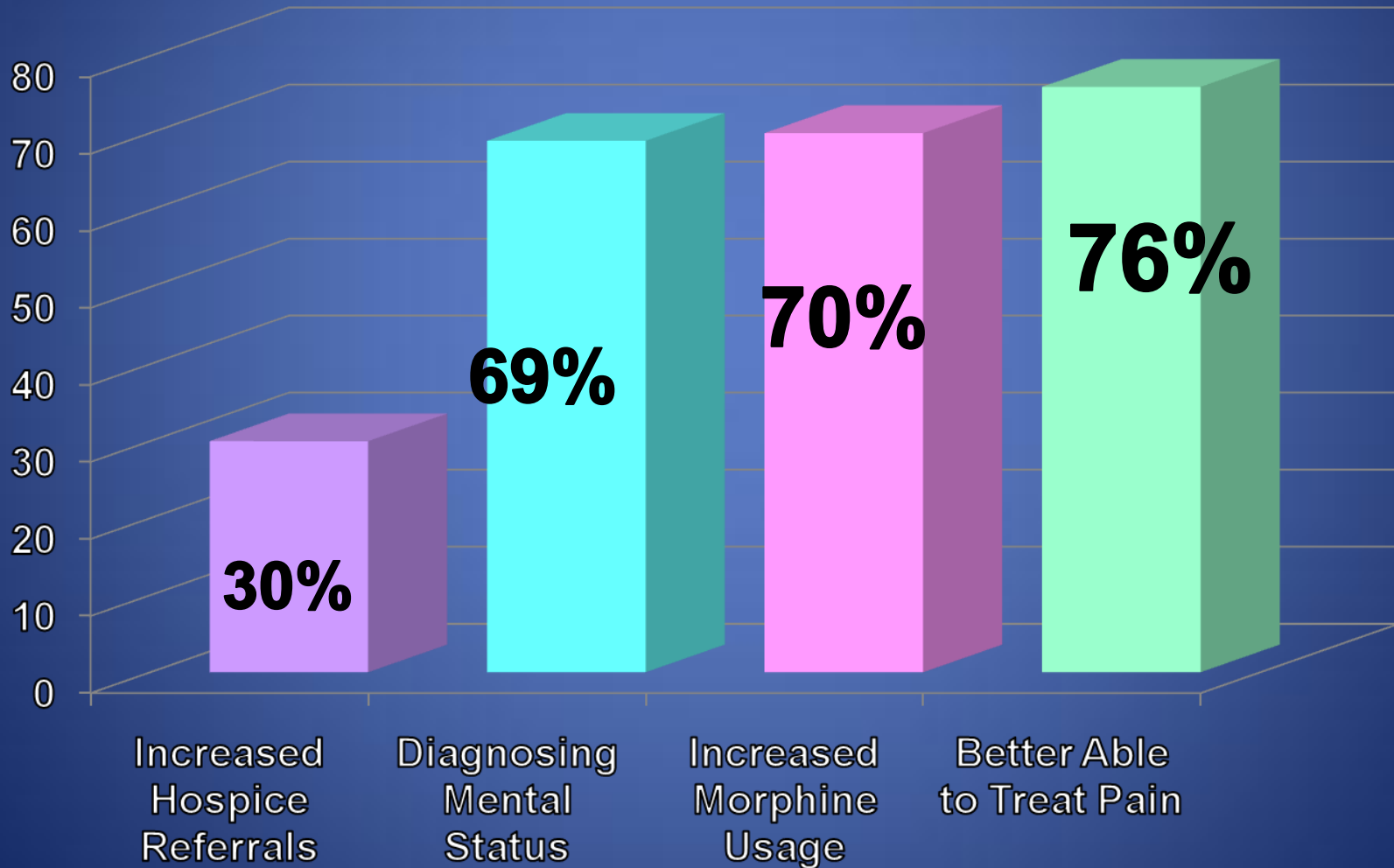
Oregon End-of-Life Care

- Consistently ranked in the top “Best Places to Die.”
- One of the highest utilizations rates of hospice.
- Has the highest rate of “in-home” deaths. (37.9% v. US average of 23.2%)

(Ann Jackson, former ED OHA)

End-of-Life Care Improvements

According to Dr. Ganzini et al. JAMA May, 2001



“It’s a great privilege to honor end of life choices of my patients and to help in this final way.”



Nicholas Gideonse, MD
OHSU Professor of
Family Medicine

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS



Thank you for your invitation. Please contact me with your questions and comments at geighmey@aol.com or 1524 SE Poplar Ave., Portland, OR 97214 or 503-233-9313.