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KEY WORD : THE RIGHT TO DIE / THE ELDERLY / ETHICAL PROBLEMS

SUPANEE TIWATTANANON : THE RIGHT TO DIE OF THE ELDERLY: ETHICAL PROBLEMS. THESIS ADVISOR : WARIYA CHINWANNO, Ph.D., WITHUN UNGPRAPAN, Dr. med., SUWANNA SATHA-ANAND, Ph.D. 105 p. ISBN 974-589-277-7

The rights of man and human dignity are something important which reasonable persons should possess, because human beings have their own value. Rational beings are ends in themselves and must never be used as mere means.

At present, the development of medical science and technology in helping to prolong life has made a big progress. In some parts, it has real utilization whereas in other aspects it involves human beings and effects the loss of human dignity.

This thesis is to consider the ethical issues concerning the right to die of the elderly based on the western philosophers' concepts of both supportive and opposite arguments including the Key Informant Interview with a physician, ethicist and the two elderly on the important issue of whether the elderly do have their own right to terminate their own lives by taking into consideration the concept of social relationship, oneself, and God, whether or not the elderly should have the right and freedom to choose for themselves their last period of life.

The result of the study reveals that, in one aspect, the right to die of the elderly can be chosen and can be decided by themselves in cases which are dehumanization, social acceptance, and without moral blameworthiness. On the other hand, problems still exist concerning the law insofar as the elderly cannot exercise the right to die by themselves.