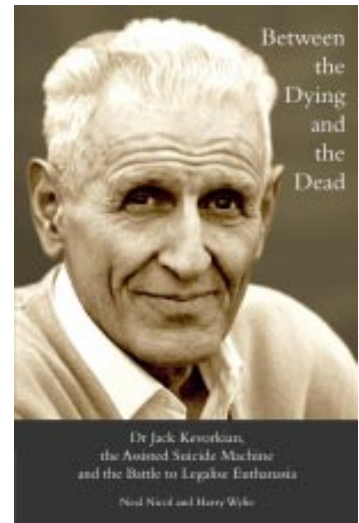


Media Release

Between the Dying and the Dead

Dr. Jack Kevorkian, the Assisted Suicide Machine
and the Battle to Legalise Euthanasia

by Neal Nicol and Harry Wylie



Dr. Jack Kevorkian is best known for inventing the suicide machine and being an outspoken proponent of the right to die with dignity. He has changed the way many people think about living wills, physician assisted suicide and euthanasia. *Between the Dying and the Dead*, his first authorised biography, tells the story of this complicated and controversial man.

On 22 November 1998, Dr Jack Kevorkian made headlines across America when a videotape showing him administering a lethal injection to Thomas Youk, a 52-year-old man in the final stages of Lou Gehrig's disease, was broadcast on national television. The programme triggered intense debate, three days after it was aired Kevorkian was arrested and charged with second-degree murder. He was tried and sentenced to 10-25 years in a maximum-security prison.

Born in 1928 in Michigan, Kevorkian was the son of Armenian refugees who fled to America to escape the Turkish genocide. A precocious student, his humour and intelligence caused him trouble at school and at home. He abandoned the engineering career his father had mapped out for him to become a doctor, but after witnessing his mother's long and painful death from cancer, Kevorkian resolved to ease the suffering of the terminally ill.

Kevorkian embarked on a career in pathology earning himself a nomination for a Nobel Prize. From pioneering living wills and the right to refuse resuscitation to perfecting blood transfusions from cadavers to the living, harvesting organs from death row inmates and inventing the suicide machine for which he became famous, Kevorkian's career was a series of forward thinking innovations. Oregon's Death with Dignity Act on which Britain's ADTI (Assisted Dying for the Terminally Ill) Bill is modelled was based on Jack Kevorkian's principles of assisted suicide.

Kevorkian's efforts to legalise euthanasia gathered pace when, in 1987, he started advertising in newspapers as a physician consultant for death counselling. In the following years he earned the nickname Dr Death for assisting in the suicide of over 130 people. In each of these cases, the individuals used homemade devices to start the flow of carbon monoxide or intravenous chemicals that caused their death. In Thomas Youk's case, however, Kevorkian had to administer the injection because Youk's illness meant he was unable to work the suicide machine himself. In an attempt to force the law, Kevorkian videoed the suicide and sent the tape to the media.

At a time when assisted suicide and euthanasia are at the forefront of political and public scrutiny, *Between the Dying and the Dead* is an absorbing account of Kevorkian's battles with the press, right-to-lifers, politicians, doctors and the legal authorities and the struggles that led to his imprisonment.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Neal Nicol has been a friend and co-worker of Dr Jack Kevorkian since 1961. A laboratory technician and president of supply company Scientific Specialties, Inc, Neal's work with Kevorkian led to his arrest on two occasions. Nicol was a willing guinea pig in the Kevorkian's research in cadaver blood transfusion and chromium 51 cell survival studies. His medical training as a corpsman and laboratory technician enabled him to assist Kevorkian on many occasions. Now retired, Neal regularly visits Kevorkian in prison and continues to be a steadfast supporter of the right to die.

Harry Wylie has been a long-time friend and confidant of Dr Jack Kevorkian. While they often argued over some of Kevorkian's opinions and actions, their friendship has stood strong. Harry and his wife Arlene have visited Kevorkian on a monthly basis during his incarceration.



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