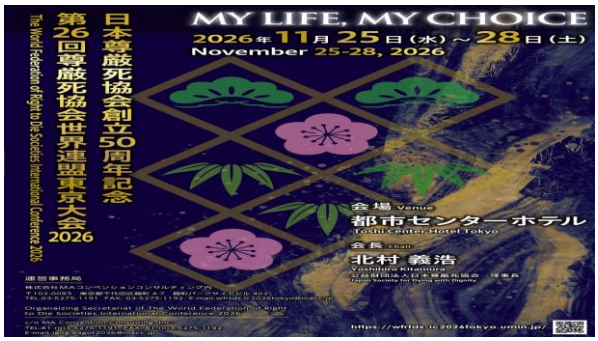


1

Voluntarily Stopping Eating and Drinking (VSED): A Lesser Known but Widely Available End-of-Life Option

2

Thaddeus Pope

3

much - of this conference focuses on

MAID

4

different
EOL option

5

VSED

6

Voluntarily
Stopping
Eating &
Drinking

7

VSED

8



9

analogy

10



11

different
options

12



13



14



15



16



17



18

Shinkansen Hits Person at Hiroshima Station, JR West Temporarily Halts Operations

Post Share



The Yomiuri Shimbun
13:03 JST, July 26, 2026

The Sanyo Shinkansen line services were suspended between Okayama and Hakata stations for about 40

19

NEWS ON JAPAN

TRAVEL

Railways Reopen Following Aichi Earthquake

Nov 08, 2026 | News On Japan

20

SO…

21



22



23



24

but

25

9h *v.* 2h

26

VSED

MAID

27

both

hasten death

28

both get you to the **same** destination

29

MAID

30



31



32

VSED

33



34



35

SO…

36

VSED

37

backup option

38

2nd choice

39

when MAID unavailable

40

no MAID available → VSED

41



42

many who want MAID **cannot** get it

43

SO…

44

VSED

45

VSED > **2%** of NL deaths

Onwuteaka-Philipsen BD, Brinkman-Stoppelenburg A, Penning C, de Jong-Krul GF, van Delden JJM, van der Heide A. Trends in end-of-life practices before and after the enactment of the euthanasia law in the Netherlands from 1990 to 2010: a repeated cross-sectional survey. *Lancet*. 2012;380(9845):908–915.

Chabot BE, Goedhart A. A survey of self-directed dying attended by proxies in the Dutch population. *Soc Sci Med*. 2009;68(10):1745-1751.

46

The NEW ENGLAND JOURNAL of MEDICINE

End-of-Life Decisions in the Netherlands over 25 Years

40% deaths euthanasia

47

Dutch situation is **not** unique

48

no MAID available → VSED

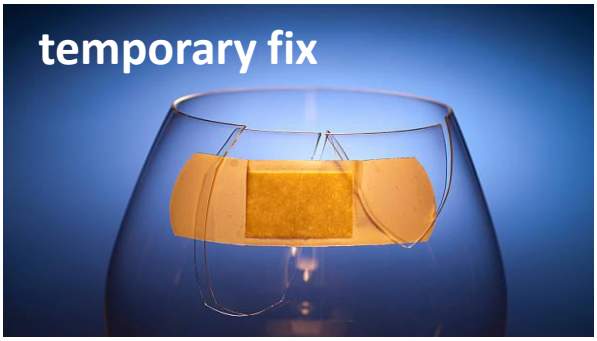
49



50



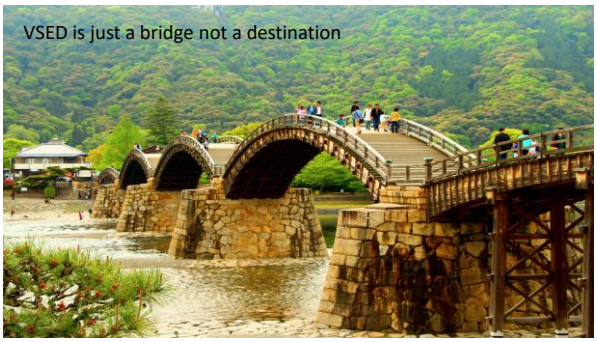
51



52



53



54

but

55

MAID is often **unavailable**

56

3 reasons

57

MAID not **authorized**

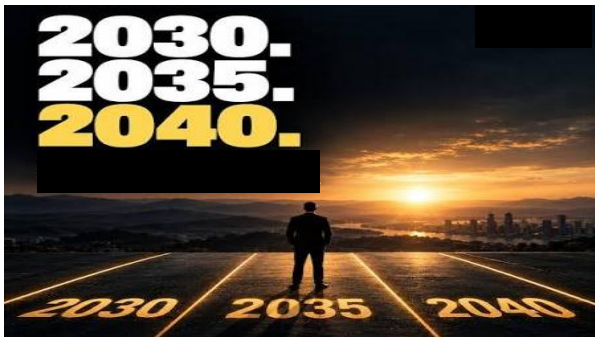
58

authorized but patient not **eligible**

59

patient is eligible - but cannot **access**

60



61

SO…

62

VSED matters

63

VSED will **continue** to matter

64



65

roadmap

66

3 parts

67

what is VSED?

68

VSED is **growing**

69

VSED is more **supported**

70

what is VSED?

71

patient **with** capacity

72

not expected to die in next days to weeks

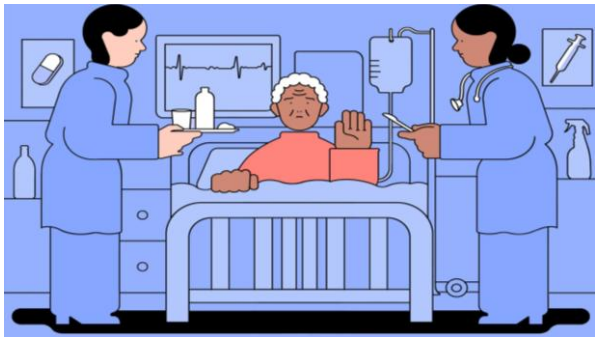
73

able to take food & fluid by mouth

74

voluntary **decision** to stop

75



76

≠ ANH

77

≠ natural loss appetite

78

≠ involuntary cachexia

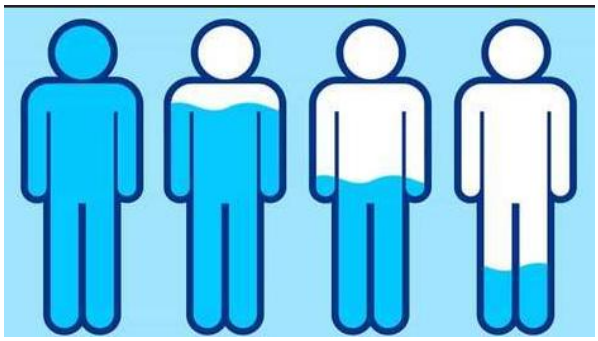
79

deliberate choice
stop fluids
by **mouth**

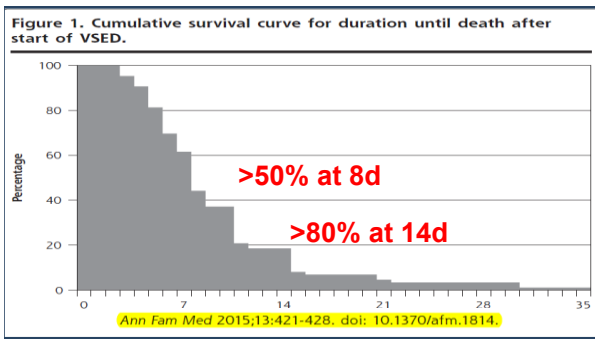
80

goal = death
from dehydration

81



82



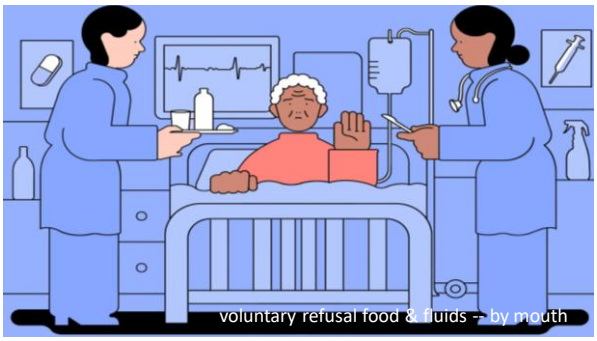
83



84

VSED

85



86



87

are VSED deaths **good** deaths

88

clinical experience



89

Journal of Hospice & Palliative Nursing

healthcare

BMC Palliative Care

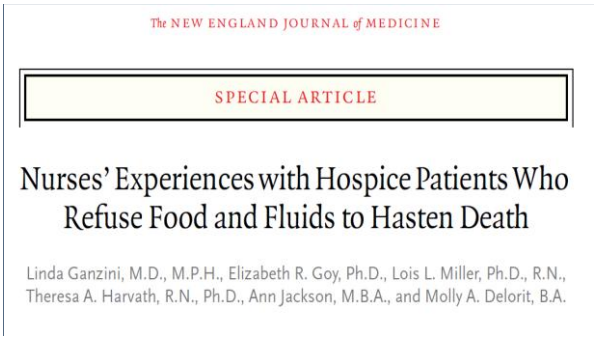
Annals of Family Medicine

90

peaceful

comfortable

91


The NEW ENGLAND JOURNAL of MEDICINE

SPECIAL ARTICLE

Nurses' Experiences with Hospice Patients Who Refuse Food and Fluids to Hasten Death

Linda Ganzini, M.D., M.P.H., Elizabeth R. Goy, Ph.D., Lois L. Miller, Ph.D., R.N., Theresa A. Harvath, R.N., Ph.D., Ann Jackson, M.B.A., and Molly A. Delorit, B.A.

92

100 Oregon **nurses** cared for VSED patients

93

most deaths

"**peaceful** with little suffering"

94



95



Voluntarily Stopping Eating and Drinking: Systematic Review of Empirical Studies

doi.org/10.1089/jpm.2024.0206

96

systematic review

synthesized **all** available empirical evidence on VSED

97

17 VSED studies

98

who

99

80+

100

dementia

conditions

ineligible MAID

101

duration

102

mean time to death = **10** days

103

VSED experience

104

caregivers found preparation & emotional toll **challenging**

105

but

106

most experiences **satisfactory**

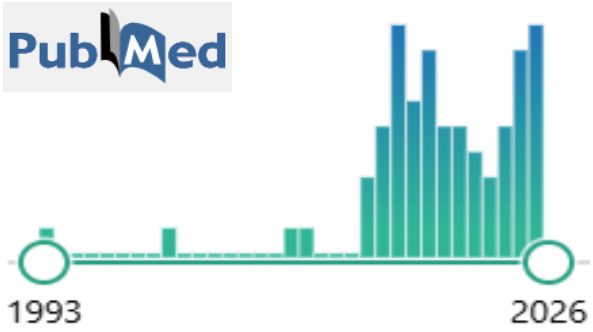
107



108

more medical articles on VSED

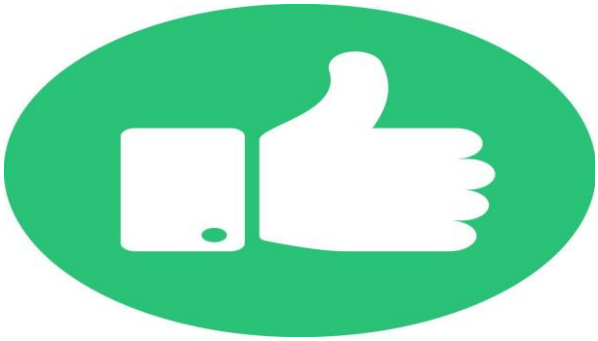
109



110



111



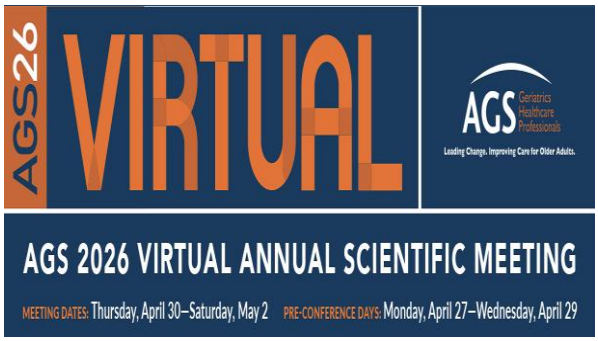
112

not only more articles

113

more professional society attention

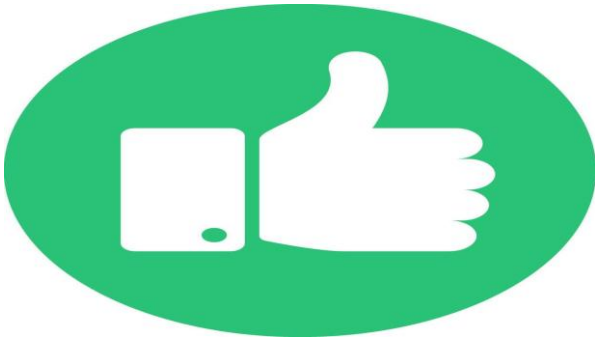
114



115



116



117

VSED is growing

118

more people are using VSED

119



120



121

200 **home** care clinicians

How to cite this article: Takeshita K, Nagao N, Dozono T, Kamiya K, Miura Y. Withdrawal of life-sustaining treatment in Japanese home care: A cross-sectional survey. J Gen Fam Med. 2025;26:213–221. https://doi.org/10.1002/jgf2.771

122

22%

experience with VSED

123



124

300 **hospice & palliative** care specialists

Shinjo T, *et al. BMJ Supportive & Palliative Care* 2017;

125

32%

experience with VSED

126



127

750 family physicians


Family physicians' perspective on voluntary stopping of eating and drinking: a cross-sectional study

128

33%

experience with VSED

129



130

700 family physicians

ANNALS OF FAMILY MEDICINE • WWW.ANNFAMMED.ORG • VOL. 13, NO. 5 • SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2015

131

46%

experience with VSED

132



133

250 palliative care specialists

Hoekstra, N. L., Streck, M., & Simon, A. (2015). Bewertung des freiwilligen verzichts auf nahrung und flüssigkeit durch palliativmedizinisch und hausärztlich tätige ärztinnen und ärzte [Assessment of the voluntary waiver of food and liquid by physicians working in palliative care and primary care]. *Zeitschrift für Palliativmedizin, 16*(02), 68–73. doi:10.1055/s-0034-1387571

134

61%

experience with VSED

135



136



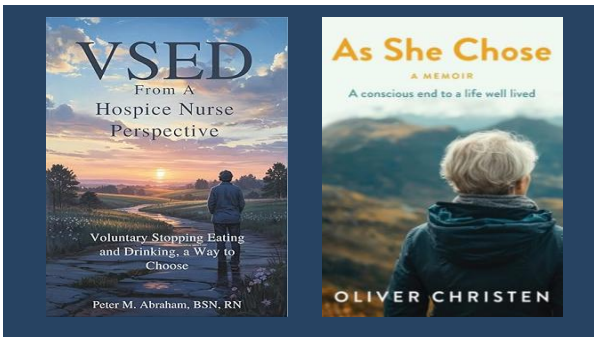
137

books

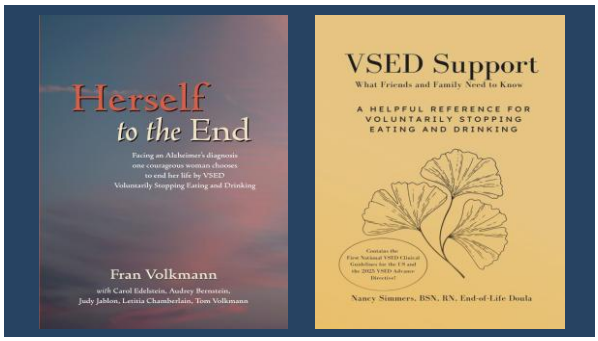
138



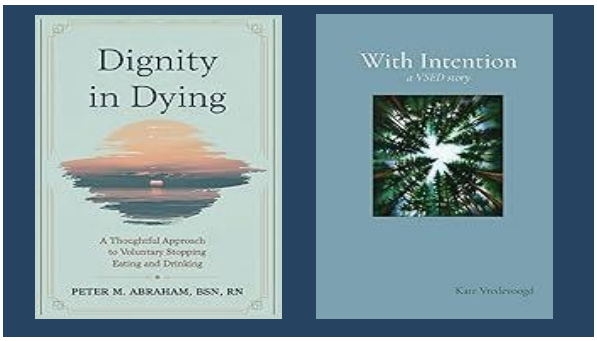
139



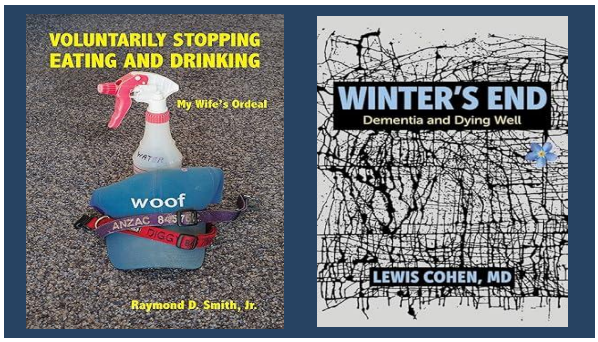
140



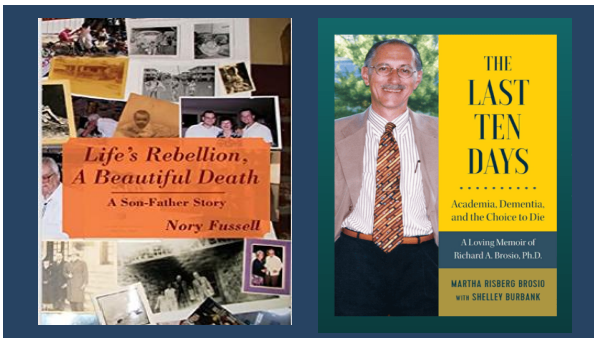
141



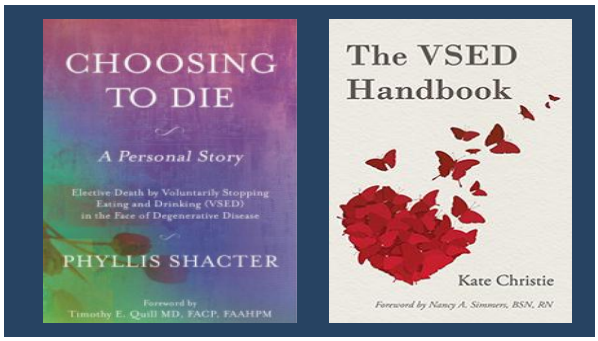
142



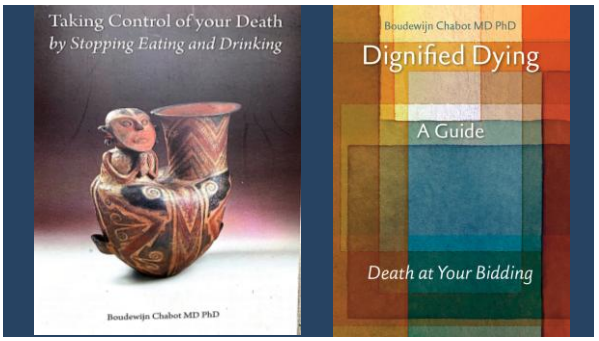
143



144



145



146



147



148



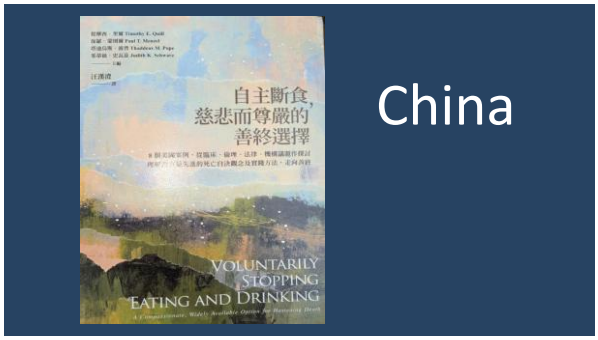
Taiwan

149



Korea

150



151



152



153



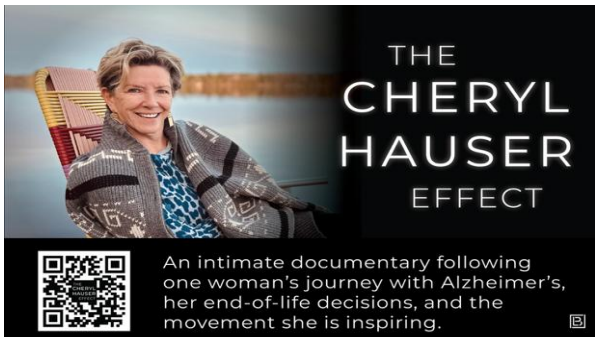
154



155



156



157

national outreach

158

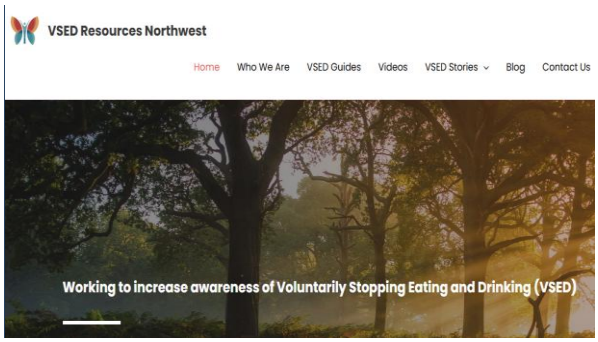


159

compassion & choices

Care and Choice at the End of Life

160



161

regional outreach

162

End of Life Choices New York

163

end of life WASHINGTON

Your life. Your death. Your choice.

164

EOLCOR End of Life Choices OREGON

END OF LIFE OPTIONS OHIO

Patient Choices Vermont

165

media attention

166

The New York Times

THE NEW OLD AGE

The VSED Exit: A Way to Speed Up Dying, Without Asking Permission

167

The Washington Post

Democracy Dies in Darkness

MAGAZINE

A Son's Decision to Help His Father Die

168

People

Right-to-Die Activist Ends Life by Starving Herself to 'Protect My Children From Seeing Me Choke and Struggle to Breathe'

169

StarTribune

MPRnews
Stay Curious. Stay Connected.

KSTP.COM
EYEWITNESS NEWS

170

The Leader
Wednesday, September 13, 2023

Obituary: Fred Bailey



"Fred chose to take charge of his death by choosing **VSED**"

171



172

more using
more talking
more sharing

173



174

VSED support

175

professional society endorsements



176



177

POSITION STATEMENT

ANA
AMERICAN NURSES ASSOCIATION

Nutrition and Hydration at the End of Life

Effective Date:	2017
Status:	Revised Position Statement
Written by:	ANA Center for Ethics and Human Rights
Adopted by:	ANA Board of Directors

178

AMWA The Vision and Voice of Women in Medicine since 1915

American Medical Women's Association

179

Position Paper

aspen LEADING THE SCIENCE AND PRACTICE OF CLINICAL NUTRITION

Ethical Aspects of Artificially Administered Nutrition and Hydration: An ASPEN Position Paper

Denise Baird Schwartz, MS, RD[1]; Albert Barrocas, MD[2];

Nutrition in Clinical Practice
Volume 0 Number 0
January 2021 1–14
© 2021 American Society for Parenteral and Enteral Nutrition
DOI: 10.1002/ncp.10633
wileyonlinelibrary.com
WILEY

180

amda THE SOCIETY FOR POST-ACUTE AND LONG-TERM CARE MEDICINE

181

aahpm AMERICAN ACADEMY OF HOSPICE AND PALLIATIVE MEDICINE

182

aahpm AMERICAN ACADEMY OF HOSPICE AND PALLIATIVE MEDICINE

amda THE SOCIETY FOR POST-ACUTE AND LONG-TERM CARE MEDICINE

ANA AMERICAN NURSES ASSOCIATION

AMWA The Vision and Voice of Women in Medicine since 1915 American Medical Women's Association

183

184

JOURNAL OF PALLIATIVE MEDICINE
Volume 20, Number 1, 2017
Mary Ann Liebert, Inc.
DOI: 10.1089/jpm.2016.0290

Position Statement

International Association for Hospice and Palliative Care Position Statement: Euthanasia and Physician-Assisted Suicide

185

Wien Med Wochenschr
https://doi.org/10.1007/s10354-018-0629-z

wmw Wiener Medizinische Wochenschrift

Austrian Palliative Society

Freiwilliger Verzicht auf Nahrung und Flüssigkeit um das Sterben zu beschleunigen

Eine Stellungnahme der österreichischen Palliativgesellschaft (OPG)

Angelika Feichtner · Dietmar Weixler · Alois Birklbauer

Eingegangen: 6. September 2017 / Angenommen: 7. Februar 2018
© Springer-Verlag GmbH Austria, ein Teil von Springer Nature 2018

186



187

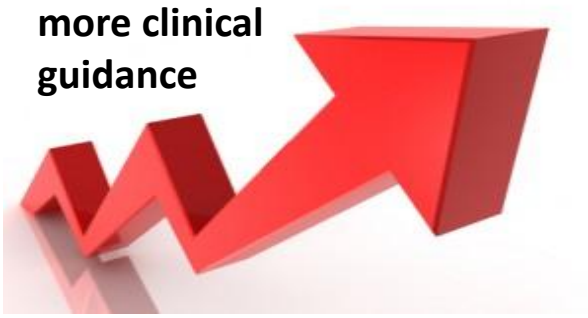


188

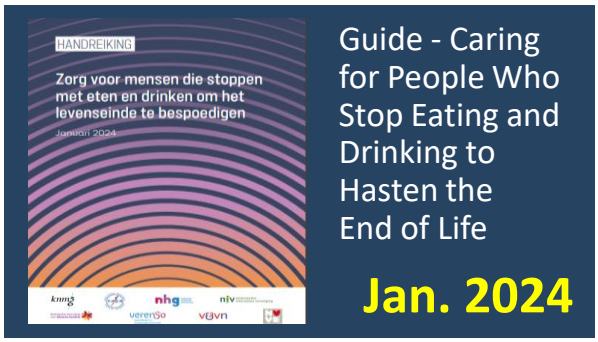
not just more professional society endorsements

189

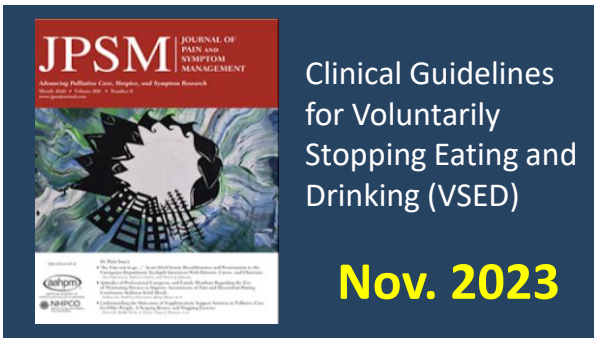
more clinical guidance



190



191



192



193

validated & comfortable EOL option

194

more clinical experience

195

more professional society statements

196

more clinical practice guidelines

197

conclusion

198



199



200

SO…

201



202



203

Thaddeus Mason Pope, JD, PhD, HEC-C
Mitchell Hamline School of Law
875 Summit Avenue
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55105
T 651-695-7661
C 310-270-3618
E Thaddeus.Pope@mitchellhamline.edu
W www.thaddeuspope.com
B medicalfutility.blogspot.com

204

EDIT

See appends from latest docs and videos – especially Japan studies

205