



Pushing Infanticide, by Wesley J. Smith, CBC special consultant

Support for infanticide is becoming positively trendy. Where once support for killing babies born with birth defects was a fringe belief, it became respectable—even mainstream—after doctors from Groningen University Medical Center in the Netherlands admitted in 2004 that they euthanized dying and profoundly disabled babies under the terms of what has come to be called the "Groningen

Protocol."

The Protocol permits doctors to lethally inject three categories of sick or disabled newborn infants:

- The baby has no chance of survival (which is sometimes misdiagnosed)
- The baby "may survive after a period of intensive treatment but expectation for their future are very grim" or,
- The baby does "not depend on technology for physiologic stability" but whose "suffering is severe, sustained, and cannot be alleviated."

This means that not only are dying babies lethally injected, but also babies with serious disabilities who do not need intensive care.

When news of the Protocol broke into the American newspaper, some of the most prestigious newspapers and professional journals leapt to its defense. Unsurprisingly, the charge was led by Princeton University's utilitarian bioethicist Peter Singer, who [defended the Protocol](#) in the *Los Angeles Times*, equating lethally injecting babies with withdrawing life-sustaining treatment—even though some of the babies killed under Groningen did not require intensive care.

On March 19, 2005, *The New York Times* carried a highly sympathetic report about the Protocol, [A Crusade Born of a Suffering Infant's Cry](#), a puff profile of one of the leaders of the Dutch infanticide movement, Dr. Eduard Verhagen, "a father of



6000 lives extinguished: An estimated amount of lives taken without consent. [read more.](#)



Conference in Arizona: CBC supported conference, *Extending Life*, March 6-8. [more info.](#)



Search for CBC For every search you make with internet search engine **Good**

three who spent years tending to sick children in underdeveloped countries." The article laments, "For his efforts to end what he calls their unbearable and incurable suffering, Dr. Verhagen has been called Dr. Death, a second Hitler and worse — mostly by American opponents of euthanasia." Poor baby.

On March 10, 2005, the *New England Journal of Medicine* lent its prestige to two Dutch doctors, allowing them to explain dispassionately to *Journal* readers how the [Groningen Protocol](#) seeks "to develop norms" for infanticide. Contrast this travesty with "[Medical Science Under Dictatorship](#)", a 1949 *NEJM* article by Dr. Leo Alexander, who investigated the medical crimes of the Holocaust at Nuremberg and who warned presciently:

Whatever proportions these crimes [euthanasia of the disabled in Germany] finally assumed, it became evident to all who investigated them that they started from small beginnings. The beginnings at first were merely a subtle shift in emphasis in the basic attitudes of physicians. It started with the acceptance of the attitude basic to the euthanasia movement, that there is such a thing as a life not worthy to be lived.

And now in "Ending the Life of a Newborn," the *Hastings Center Report* —the most important bioethics journal in the world—has just published another pro Groningen Protocol article, granting even greater support for Dutch infanticide among the bioethics intelligentsia. Not only do the authors, a Dutch and an American bioethicist, support lethally injecting dying babies, but also those who are disabled, writing, "Critics charge that the protocol does not successfully identify which babies will die. But it is precisely those babies who could continue to live, but whose lives would be wretched in the extreme, who stand in most need of the interventions for which the protocol offers guidance."

The article assumes that guidelines will protect against abuse, *but infanticide is by definition abuse*. Moreover, even if undertaken in good faith, Dutch euthanasia guidelines for adults and teenagers have continually been violated without legal consequence for decades, and so why would any rational observer expect anything different from infanticide regulations? Even the authors understand that mistakes will happen and, typical of the mindset, assume that if murder of the helpless is committed in front of an open window it is somehow more acceptable:

Determining in an instant case whether the protocol is applicable will always require judgment, and because the stakes are inordinately high no matter what is decided, the judgment must be made with fear and trembling. That said, however, we believe that transparency in the deliberations concerning the ending of an infant's life--which is just as important as it is in the deliberations concerning euthanasia in adults--is adequately promoted by the protocol's

[Search](#), raise 1 cent for CBC.

DONATE

One-Time Gift:



Monthly:



You have received this information because you are a part of The Center for Bioethics and Culture Network, 130 Market Place, #146, San Ramon, CA 94582, 773-465-3074

forward to a friend



Comments or suggestions?



requirements.

It wasn't many years ago that almost everyone accepted that infanticide is intrinsically and inherently wrong. Clearly, this is no longer true. With growth of [personhood theory](#) that denies the intrinsic value of human life, and with the [invidiously](#) discriminatory "quality of life" ethic permeating the highest levels of the medical and bioethical thinking, we are moving toward a medical system in which babies are put down like dogs and killing is redefined as a caring act.

But bigotry is bigotry and murder is murder—even if you spell it c.o.m.p.a.s.s.i.o.n.

Wesley J. Smith is special consultant to the CBCnetwork and senior fellow at the Discovery Institute. Wesley blogs at [SecondHand Smoke](#).

Tell us what you think. Do you think infanticide is ever justified? [Send us your comments.](#)

Keep your finger on the pulse of the bioethics discussion. Sign up here for our weekly bioethics newsletter.

First Name:

Last Name:

*Email Address: