

# THE ETHICS OF EXPANDED TERMINAL SEDATION IN END OF LIFE CARE

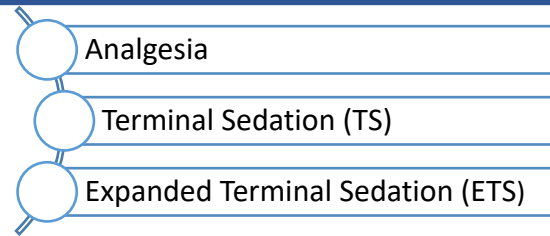
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## BACKGROUND

The dying process is rarely free from suffering.<sup>1</sup> There are a range of end of life practices available to alleviate suffering at the end of life.<sup>1</sup> Significant controversy surrounds the use of sedatives until the point of death ("Terminal Sedation").<sup>2</sup>



## RESEARCH QUESTION

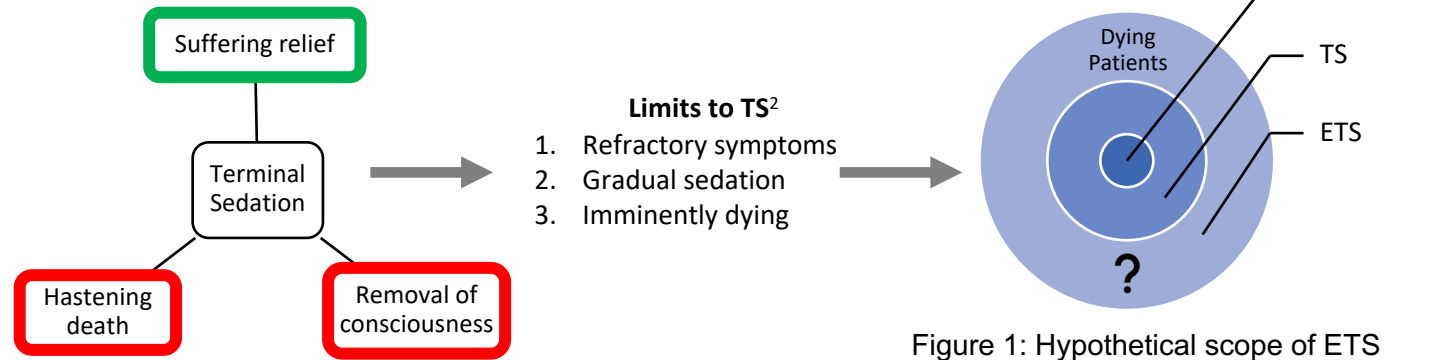
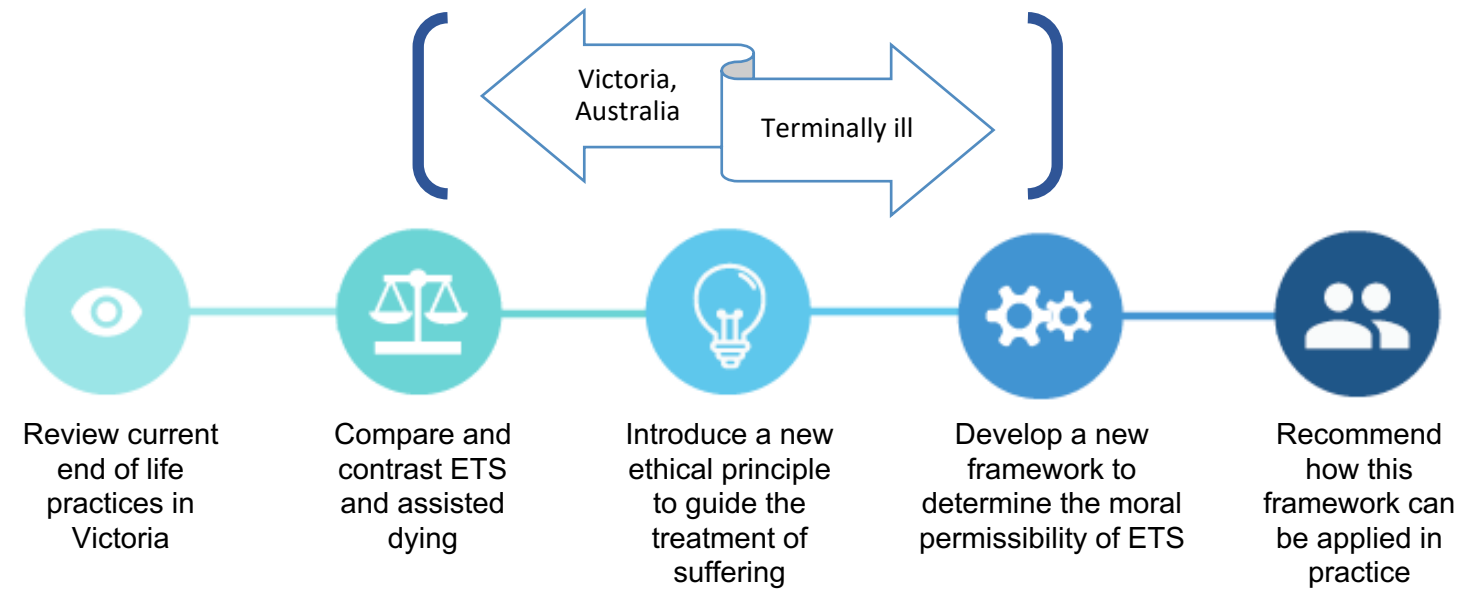


Figure 1: Hypothetical scope of ETS

## AIMS AND METHODOLOGY



## VICTORIAN END OF LIFE CARE<sup>3</sup>

	Terminal Sedation (TS)	Voluntary Assisted Dying (VAD)
<b>Who</b>	Incurable medical condition	Incurable medical condition
<b>Age</b>	Any age	18 years or older
<b>Estimated Life Expectancy</b>	Two weeks or less	Six months or less
<b>Suffering</b>	Refractory	Intolerable
<b>Consent</b>	Patient or advance care directive or proxy	Individual with decision-making capacity initiates request
<b>Medication</b>	Sedatives (administered proportionally)	Lethal medication combined with a sedative

## A RIGHT TO SUFFERING RELIEF



Doctors have a duty to take reasonable steps to alleviate suffering in dying patients.



All dying patients should be entitled to access appropriate interventions to relieve their suffering.

## KEY FINDINGS

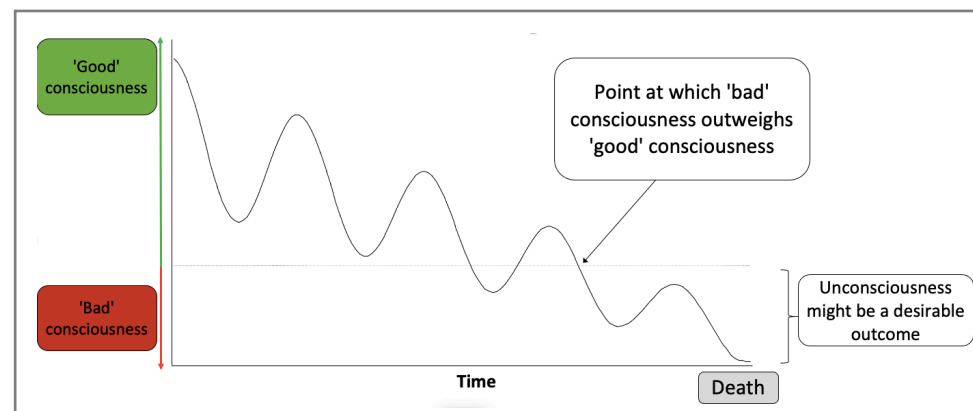


Figure 2: Quality of consciousness at the end of life

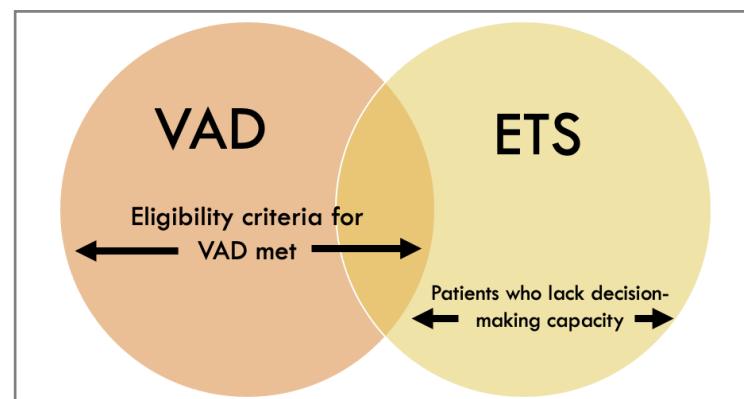


Figure 3: Convergence between the eligibility criteria for VAD and ETS

## CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

ETS is morally permissible in the following end of life scenarios in Victoria:

1. Cases of **intolerable** suffering where earlier treatment options are likely to fail.
2. The use of **rapid sedation** where gradual sedation is likely to be ineffective or where unconsciousness is a clinically desirable outcome.
3. The patient has **less than six months to live** and meets all other criteria for VAD in Victoria.
4. The patient has **less than six months to live**, is suffering intolerably, lacks decision-making capacity, and sedation is considered to be in their best interests.

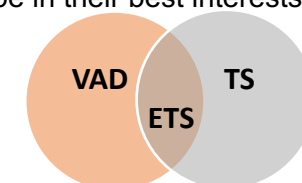


Figure 4: ETS bridges the gap between VAD and TS

## REFERENCES

1. Hui D, dos Santos R, Chisholm GB, Bruera E. Symptom Expression in the Last Seven Days of Life Among Cancer Patients Admitted to Acute Palliative Care Units. *Journal of Pain and Symptom Management* 2015;50(4):488-94
2. de Graeff A, Dean M. Palliative sedation therapy in the last weeks of life: a literature review and recommendations for standards. *J Palliat Med* 2007;10(1):67-85
3. Safer Care Victoria (SCV). Palliative sedation therapy: Statewide guidance for Victoria. Victorian Government; 2020