Houston—Several animal studies and both randomized and open-label studies have found that cannabidiol oil (CBD) shows promise in treating seizure disorders, but questions remain about proper dosages to apply, the potential for adverse effects, and the drug-drug interactions with other antiepileptic drugs (AEDS), according to several abstracts that were presented here in December at the annual meeting of the American Epilepsy Society.

In one abstract, study authors reported that the extract appeared to affect blood levels of other AEDs, potentially affecting seizure control.
### NEUROETHICS/PROFESSIONALISM

James L. Bernat, MD, FAAN, Louis and Ruth Frank Professor of Neuroscience, professor of neurology and medicine, Geisel School of Medicine at Dartmouth and Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center, Hanover, NH.


The Findings: Since 2009 in Washington State, 39 patients with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) requested “death with dignity” (physician-assisted suicide; physician-assisted death), which is a prescription for lethal medications on request in the setting of terminal illness. Seventy-seven percent of these patients thereafter swallowed the lethal medications and killed themselves. The average age of patients was 65, and there were no reported complications. The principal reason cited by the patients was loss of autonomy and dignity accompanied by the loss of ability to enjoy activities. These findings paralleled a similar group of 92 ALS patients in Oregon who also had requested physician-assisted death.

Why It’s Important: With the continued increase in the number of states legalizing physician-assisted death, practicing neurologists are increasingly likely to encounter patients making this request. Neurologists practicing in jurisdictions in which physician-assisted death has been legalized must understand the stipulations of the law including their duties and rights, and be prepared to respond to such requests. Currently, all states that have legaled physician-assisted death (Oregon, Washington, Montana, Vermont, California, and Colorado) allow physicians who choose not to participate to decline. It is unclear from this report the extent to which the ALS patients had help from relatives of friends to swallow the medications. The intent of the law is self-administration, but although this point is mentioned in the law, the precise boundaries of assistance are not stipulated.

### NEUROGENETICS

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The Findings: The ExAC (Exome Aggregation Consortium) database is a collection of shared data from deep sequencing of the exome, the 1-2 percent of the genome coding for protein, from over 60,000 individuals. Collectively, this provides a snapshot of the complexity of human genetic diversity with over

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