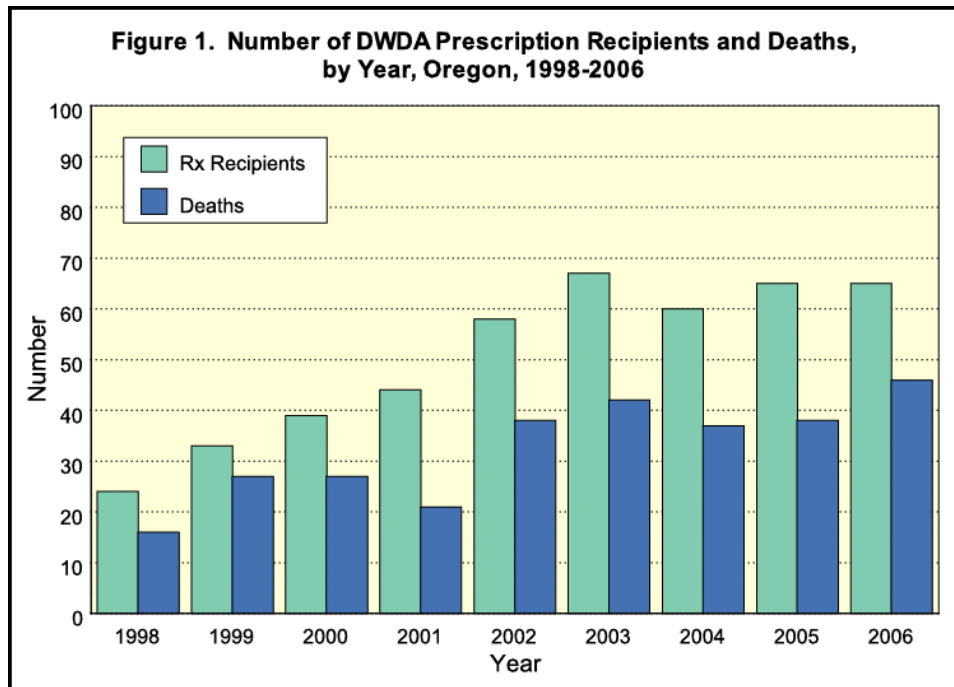


Summary of Oregon's Death with Dignity Act - 2006

Under Oregon's Death with Dignity Act (DWDA), terminally-ill adult Oregonians are allowed to obtain and use prescriptions from their physicians for self-administered, lethal medications. The Oregon Public Health Division is required by the Act to collect information on compliance and to issue an annual report. The key findings from 2006 are listed below. For more detail, please view the figures and tables on our web site at <http://oregon.gov/DHS/ph/pas/index.shtml>.



- During 2006, 65 prescriptions for lethal medications under the provisions of the DWDA were written (figure 1). Of these, 35 patients took the medications, 19 died of their underlying disease, and 11 were alive at the end of 2006. In addition, 11 patients with earlier prescriptions died from taking the medications, resulting in a total of 46 DWDA deaths during 2006. This corresponds to an estimated 14.7 DWDA deaths per 10,000 total deaths.
- Forty physicians wrote the 65 prescriptions (range 1-7).
- Since the law was passed in 1997, 292 patients have died under the terms of the law.

- As in prior years, participants were more likely to have cancer (87%), and have more formal education (41% had at least a baccalaureate degree) than other Oregonians who died. Patients who died in 2006 were slightly older (median age 74 years) than in previous years (median age 69 years).
- Most patients died at home (93%); and were enrolled in hospice care (76%), although the number enrolled in hospice was less than in previous years (87%).
- All patients, except one, had some form of health insurance: 64% had private insurance and 33% had Medicare or Medicaid.
- Complications were reported in four patients during 2006; they all regurgitated some of the medication.
- As in previous years, the most frequently mentioned end-of-life concerns were: loss of autonomy (96%), decreasing ability to participate in activities that made life enjoyable (96%), and loss of dignity (76%). During 2006, more participants were concerned about inadequate pain control (48%) than in previous years (22%).
- During 2006, 10 referrals were made to the Board of Medical Examiners (BME) for incorrectly completed reporting forms. The BME found no violations of “good faith compliance” with the Act and did not sanction any physicians for “unprofessional conduct” regarding the Act.