

California appeals court rejects right-to-die lawsuit

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A California appeals court on Thursday rejected a lawsuit by three terminally ill patients that sought to clear the way for doctors to prescribe fatal medication to them and others like them who want the option of taking their lives.

A state law that makes helping someone commit suicide a crime clearly applies to physicians who provide patients lethal drugs, a division of the Fourth District Court of Appeal ruled.

"We believe prescribing a [lethal dose](#) of drugs to a terminally ill patient with the knowledge the patient may use it to end his or her life goes beyond the mere giving of advice and encouragement and falls under the category of direct aiding and abetting," Associate Justice Alex McDonald wrote.

The ruling affirmed a lower court decision that dismissed the [lawsuit](#). The lawsuit was brought against the state by Christy O'Donnell and two other terminally ill California residents.

O'Donnell suffers from Stage IV cancer of the left lung and was given less than six months to live in May when the lawsuit was filed.

California has since approved right-to-die legislation, though it will not likely go into effect in time to benefit the three patients, the appeals court acknowledged.

John Kappos, an attorney for the patients, said they are considering all options, including an appeal to the California Supreme Court.

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