Tony Bland, 1993

Tony Bland was a Liverpool supporter crushed at Hillsborough in 1989. He was left in a 'persistent vegetative state'. Professor O'Behan testified that "the patient has no awareness nor can he suffer pain or experience pleasure."

Doctors applied for a court order allowing him to 'die with dignity'. His parents supported this. Tony Bland became the first patient in the UK to be allowed to die through the withdrawal of life-prolonging treatment including food and water.

Peter Singer has cited this case as evidence of the decline of the 'sanctity of life' ethic in the UK.

Dr Jack Kevorkian, 1998

Jack Kevorkian was a doctor who began helping patients to die in 1990. He created a suicide machine, designed to be operated by patients and give them a peaceful, painless death. It was confiscated by the authorities, so many of his patients died by other means, such as CO poisoning in Jack's van.

Despite many attempts, the courts could not convict Kevorkian until in 1998 he killed a patient, Thomas Youk, who had ALS and was unable to work the machine. Kevorkian filmed the death and it was broadcast on 60 minutes. Jack was convicted of murder, released on parole in 2007, and died in 2011.

David Goodall, 2018

David Goodall was a London-born scientist who lived in Autralia but flew to Switzerland in May 2018 to end his life.

Goodall had advocated voluntary euthanasia for years. He was not terminally ill, but chose assisted suicide due to his quality of life.

"My life has been rather poor for the past year or so and I'm very happy to end it," he said. Goodall argued that the elderly should "be free to choose death when the death is at an appropriate time."

Switzerland made assisted suicide legal in 1942.

Assited Dying Bill 2015

The Commission on Assisted Dying, funded by supporters of euthanasia, called for a change in UK law to allow assisted dying.

The Assisted Dying Bill suggested assisted suicide should be allowed if a person was over 18, terminally ill and judged as having less than 12 months to live, making a voluntary choice and not impaired mentally. They would need to be independently assessed by two doctors, but the patient would have to take the drugs themselves.

In 2015, the Bill was rejected by 330 to 118 votes.

Dr Moor, 1998 – Double Effect

Dr Moor was acquitted of murdering George Liddell, despite admitting giving him a lethal dose of diamorphine.

This case shows that it is acceptable for a doctor to give pain killing drugs that will kill the patient, as long as this was not the intention.

Daniel Sulmasy came up with a test for doctors to check their intentions in cases of Double Effect. The doctor should ask himself, "If the patient were not to die after my actions, would I feel that I had failed to accomplish what I had set out to do?" He said if you sincerely answer no, then you were trying to relieve pain, not kill the patient.

The Netherlands

In 2002, the Netherlands became the first country in the world to make voluntary euthanasia legal. There are currently around 3000 cases of physician assisted dying in the Netherlands each year, accounting for around 2% of deaths.

In 2012, the BBC reported on new mobile units travelling around the Netherlands to areas where there are no facilities for euthanasia. Access to the 'Life End' units will be free, and patients "can choose injections administered by the medical team, or they may drink a lethal concoction of life-ending drugs."