

# THE *REAL* FACTS ABOUT DISABILITY AND "QUALITY OF LIFE"

(If only Kevorkian and others would read the research literature before deciding it is reasonable to want to die when you have an extensive disability!):

- 86% of spinal cord injured high-level quadriplegics rated their quality of life as average or better than average. Only 17% of their ER doctors, nurses, and technicians thought they would have an average or better quality of life if they acquired quadriplegic (KA Gerhart et al., ***Annals of Emergency Medicine***, 1994, vol. 23, 807-812).
- No differences were found between 190 physically disabled persons and 195 "able bodied" persons on ratings of life satisfaction, frustration with life or mood (P Cameron et al., ***Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology***, 1973, vol. 41, 207- 214).
- The duration of disability was positively related with acceptance of disability in persons with spinal cord injury-related paralysis. Severity of disability was of no importance in accepting life with a disability (F Woodrich & JB Patterson, ***Journal of Rehabilitation***, 1983, July-Sept., 26-30).
- 60% of paraplegics reported feelings more positively about themselves since becoming disabled (C Ray & J West, ***Paraplegia***, 1984, vol. 22, 75-86).
- Interviews and tests administered to 133 persons with severe mobility disabilities revealed no differences between them and the nondisabled norm on psychosocial measures. In another study, no significant difference was found between persons with severe disabilities (requiring wheelchair use and daily personal assistance) and persons with no disabilities on quality of life measures (R Stensman, ***Scandinavian Journal of Rehabilitation Medicine***, 1985, vol. 17, 87-99).
- In a study of life satisfaction of quadriplegics, fewer than a third of those who used ventilators expressed dissatisfaction with their lives. There is evidence that life satisfaction scores are higher in persons who have had more time to adjust to disability (JR Bach & MC Tilton, ***Archives of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation***, 1994, vol. 75, 626-632).
- Spinal cord injured rehabilitation patients were similar to the general population on self-ratings of depression, yet hospital staff consistently overestimated the patients' level of depression (LA Cushman & MP

Dijkers, *Archives of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation*, 1990, vol. 71, 191-196.

- Three-quarters of persons with spinal cord injuries rated their quality of life as good or excellent. Amount of paralysis made no difference, but people who used ventilators rated their quality of life higher than those not needing ventilators (GG Whiteneck et al., *Rocky Mountain Spinal Cord Injury System Report to the National Institute of Handicapped Research*, 1985, 29-33).
- Elderly paralyzed veterans rated their quality of life higher than similarly aged men without disabilities (MG Eisenberg & CC Saltz, *Paraplegia*, 1991, vol. 29, 514-520).