



compassion & choices
of Washington

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First Terminally-Ill Washingtonian Uses Death with Dignity Act
*Death with Dignity Law Aids in Ending Unbearable Suffering;
Provides Comfort and Peace of Mind*

SEATTLE, WA – Compassion & Choices of Washington (C&C), a nonprofit organization advocating for better end-of-life care and choices, said that Linda Fleming, age 66, of Sequim, last night became the first terminally ill Washingtonian to die using the state's Death with Dignity Act. Linda was diagnosed just one month ago with stage 4 pancreatic cancer, and was told she was actively dying.

Linda was stunned when she received her terminal diagnosis, as she had only recently begun feeling discomfort. Linda's disease progressed rapidly and her pain worsened dramatically. "I had only recently learned how to live in the world as I had always wanted to, and now I will no longer be here. So my fatal disease arrived at a most inopportune time," said Linda.

After working with her physician and C&C's Client Support volunteers to carefully consider her choices and make her end-of-life decisions, Linda took her prescribed medication on Thursday evening at home with her family, her dog and her physician at her bedside. "The pain became unbearable, and it was only going to get worse," said Linda in explaining her decision to use the Death with Dignity law. Linda died peacefully knowing that she had a choice in controlling her suffering and time of death from pancreatic cancer. "I am a very spiritual person, and it was very important to me to be conscious, clear-minded and alert at the time of my death. The powerful pain medications were making it difficult to maintain the state of mind I wanted to have at my death. And I knew I would have to increase them. I am grateful that the Death with Dignity law provides me the choice of a death that fits my own personal beliefs."

"When a cure is no longer possible, the Death With Dignity Act adds another option for patients dying from a terminal illness. The prescribed medication gives patients peace of mind that they can use to take control of their dying if suffering becomes intolerable,"

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said Dr. Tom Preston, MD, a cardiologist and C&C's medical director, "Most dying patients experience suffering. The Death With Dignity Act allows a physician to help his patients maintain as much control and dignity as they can at the end of life. Last night, the Death With Dignity Act provided a way to honor this patient's final decision."

Dr. Preston said that terminal patients are deriving comfort and peace of mind from prescriptions issued under the new law, and that the law is working as voters and its sponsors intended.

C&C provides expert consultation, concrete information, forms for use with the law, and support for families, terminally ill patients and individuals facing the end of life. Call us at 877-222-2816. All services are free of charge.

[Compassion & Choices of Washington](#) advocates for excellent end-of-life care, patient-centered care and choice at the end of life. We steward, protect and uphold Washington's Death With Dignity Act.

Compassion & Choices of Washington is an affiliate of Compassion & Choices.

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