**CHAPTER 13**

**BIRTH CONTROL AND EUTHANASIA**

**Maulana Akbar Shah @ U Tun Aung**

**Contraception**

Contraception is a method of preventing pregnancy that can be done through various ways. It allows women to control their reproductive health and actively participate in family planning. While scholars hold different views on contraception, a Sahabah's perspective is mentioned in a hadith narrated by Jābir ibn 'Abdullāh, who reported that they practiced coitus interruptus during the revelation of the Qur'an, and if it had been unlawful, the Qur'an would have prohibited it.[[1]](#footnote-1)

The effectiveness of contraception heavily relies on the screening for pregnancy. Clinicians must be reasonably certain that the patient is not pregnant based on specific criteria (Trussell et al., 2011). The seven common signs of pregnancy include missed periods, nausea and vomiting, tender and swollen breasts, fatigue, frequent urination, mood swings, and food cravings or aversions (American Pregnancy Association, 2021). If a woman experiences these symptoms, it is essential to take a pregnancy test and consult with a healthcare provider before starting any contraceptive method.[[2]](#footnote-2)

**Tubal ligation**

Tubal ligation, a surgical sterilization procedure for women, involves blocking, cutting, or sealing the fallopian tubes. This prevents eggs from traveling from the ovaries to the uterus, effectively eliminating the possibility of fertilization. The procedure can be performed using various techniques, including the Pomeroy technique, where a section of the tube is tied and cut, or electrocautery, which uses electric current to seal the tubes. Laparoscopic approaches have become increasingly common, allowing for smaller incisions and faster recovery times. While highly effective, tubal ligation is considered permanent, though in rare cases, reversal may be possible. The procedure does not affect hormone production or menstruation, as the ovaries remain intact. Potential risks include infection, bleeding, and damage to surrounding organs, though these complications are relatively rare.[[3]](#footnote-3)

**Vasectomy**

Vasectomy stands as one of the most effective and widely chosen methods of permanent contraception for men. This surgical procedure, designed to prevent the release of sperm during ejaculation, has gained popularity due to its high success rate, relatively simple execution, and minimal long-term side effects. As more couples seek long-term family planning solutions, understanding the intricacies of vasectomy becomes increasingly important.

At its core, a vasectomy involves the interruption of the vas deferens, the pair of tubes responsible for transporting sperm from the testicles to the urethra. This interruption effectively prevents sperm from mixing with seminal fluid, thus eliminating the possibility of fertilization during sexual intercourse. The procedure is typically performed on an outpatient basis under local anesthesia, requiring only about 20 to 30 minutes to complete.

**Hysterectomy**

Hysterectomy, the surgical removal of the uterus, is a major procedure that results in permanent sterilization for women. There are several types of hysterectomy, including total hysterectomy (removal of the uterus and cervix), partial hysterectomy (removal of the upper part of the uterus, leaving the cervix intact), and radical hysterectomy (removal of the uterus, cervix, and part of the vagina, typically performed in cases of cancer). The procedure can be performed through various approaches, including abdominal, vaginal, laparoscopic, or robotic-assisted surgery. While primarily used to treat conditions such as uterine fibroids, endometriosis, or gynecological cancers, hysterectomy also results in sterilization. The procedure leads to the cessation of menstruation and the inability to become pregnant. If the ovaries are also removed (oophorectomy), it results in immediate menopause.[[4]](#footnote-4)

**Sterilization from an Islamic perspective**

Sterilization in Islamic contexts is often discussed in relation to both medical procedures and family planning. The general principle in Islam is that any medical treatment or procedure that brings benefit and does not cause harm is permissible. This includes sterilization methods used in healthcare settings to prevent infections and ensure patient safety.

In Islamic jurisprudence, the approach to contraception is nuanced, distinguishing between temporary and permanent methods. Temporary forms of contraception are generally viewed as permissible, aligning with the Islamic principle of family planning and responsible parenthood. This acceptance is based on the understanding that such methods do not permanently alter the body's natural reproductive capabilities. However, permanent sterilization methods have sparked more debate among Islamic scholars. The Islamic Fiqh Council of the Muslim World League, a respected authority in Islamic jurisprudence, addressed this issue in their 1985 resolution. They concluded that permanent sterilization is not permissible under normal circumstances, citing the preservation of human reproductive capacity as a fundamental aspect of Islamic teachings. The council made an exception for cases of medical necessity, acknowledging that health concerns can override the general prohibition. This stance reflects the Islamic principle of preserving life and health, which can sometimes take precedence over other considerations.[[5]](#footnote-5)

The National Fatwa Council of Malaysia, a prominent authority on Islamic law in the country, has provided specific guidance on the issue of sterilization. In 1981, the council issued a fatwa that addressed both permanent and temporary forms of contraception. The fatwa explicitly declared permanent sterilization methods, such as tubal ligation for women and vasectomy for men, as *haram* (forbidden) under Islamic law. This prohibition is rooted in the Islamic principle of preserving the natural human form and function as created by Allah. However, the council recognized that there might be exceptional circumstances where such procedures could be permissible, specifically citing valid medical reasons. This allowance for medical necessity demonstrates the council's consideration of health concerns within the framework of Islamic ethics. Importantly, the fatwa distinguishes between permanent and reversible forms of contraception, permitting the latter. This nuanced approach reflects an attempt to balance traditional Islamic values with modern family planning needs.[[6]](#footnote-6)

The Islamic Medical Association of Malaysia (IMAM) has taken a progressive stance on the use of modern sterilization techniques in healthcare settings. Their position, articulated in 2015, reflects an attempt to harmonize Islamic principles with contemporary medical practices. IMAM supports the use of sterilization techniques, particularly in medical contexts, arguing that these practices align with fundamental Islamic principles. They emphasize two key Islamic concepts: preventing harm (*dar' al-mafasid*) and promoting health (*jalb al-masalih*). By framing sterilization techniques within these ethical principles, IMAM provides a religious justification for their use in appropriate medical situations. This approach demonstrates how Islamic medical ethics can evolve to accommodate modern healthcare practices while remaining true to core religious values. IMAM's position also highlights the ongoing dialogue within the Muslim medical community about balancing traditional interpretations with the realities of modern healthcare.[[7]](#footnote-7)

**Euthanasia**

Euthanasia is generally known as allowing the patient to die. Euthanasia is also understood as assisted suicide, physician-assisted suicide or doctor-assisted suicide. It is also recognized as “mercy killing” in contemporary literature. In other words, euthanasia is to take a deliberate action with the express intention of ending a life to relieve unstoppable suffering. Britannica Encyclopedia referred euthanasia as the act or practice of painlessly putting to death persons suffering from painful and incurable disease or incapacitating physical disorder or allowing them to die by withholding treatment or withdrawing artificial life-support measures.[[8]](#footnote-8)

Presently, experts in this field classified euthanasia in two categories. They are: [1] active euthanasia, [2] passive euthanasia. At the same time there are two categories of euthanasia under both active and passive euthanasia and they are (1) voluntary euthanasia and Involuntary euthanasia.[[9]](#footnote-9)

**Categories of Euthanasia**

**Active Euthanasia**

It is an action by the medical professional and someone who deliberately kills the patient by giving lethal injection or increasing doses of pain killer medications which may eventually be toxic for the patient. Active euthanasia includes life-ending actions conducted by the patient or somebody else. Active euthanasia is a much more controversial subject than passive euthanasia. This action is criticized by many including religious, moral, ethical environments with strong emotion. Euthanasia has been a very controversial and emotive topic for a long time.[[10]](#footnote-10)

**Passive Euthanasia**

It is an action by someone but it is an omission to deliberately letting the patient to die or they don't do something necessary to keep the patient alive, or when they stop doing something that is keeping the patient alive. For example, removal of feeding tubes, lifesaving facilities, or suspension of life-extending drugs and operation.[[11]](#footnote-11)

**Voluntary Euthanasia**

It is either an act or omission conducted by the medical doctor or someone else with a proper consent of the patient by giving lethal injection or high dose pain killer injection or removal of medical attention including all facilities that keep the patient alive. If the patient himself ends the life sustaining drug or feeding tube and lifesaving facilities, even though he could not bear intractable pain or he could not tolerate his family’s burden on his medical care, it indicate he had committed suicide. Suicide is defined as the act or instance of taking one’s own life, voluntarily or intentionally, in order to escape from an unbearable psychological or physical situation.[[12]](#footnote-12)

**Involuntary Euthanasia**

It is letting the patient to die without his consent and permission. This type of euthanasia is conducted with the consent of family of the patient or decision of the medical doctor. However, some of the opponent of this act blames it as homicide because it is an act of physician assisted killing of a person. Homicide is the deliberate and unlawful killing of one person by another. Although the consent of the patient is given for he could no more bear the suffering, ending life of a person is not supposed to be the job of any human being.[[13]](#footnote-13)

**Euthanasia from an Islamic Perspective**

Noble and moral attitudes are reflected as shining values by which people are peaceful, acceptable and society is prosperous. In the case of euthanasia, is it acceptable as a norm of Muslim society or is it objectionable? The issue must be scrutinized in the light of the Qur’an and Sunnah. Islam does not allow killing but death is understood as part of belief, and man’s reality. Active euthanasia is not permissible as it is deliberately ending the life of the patient. Is passive euthanasia acceptable for it allows the patient to end his life by voluntarily withholding life saving mechanisms? The Qur’an affirms that taking one's life is prohibited. Allah says: “*Do not take life, which Allah made sacred, other than in the course of justice*”. (Qur’an, 17:33). Life of a person belongs to Allah where a person's lifespan is already destined and decided by Him. No one or no lifesaving machine can delay his departure.

In this regard, Allah says: “*When their time comes they cannot delay it for a single hour nor can they bring it forward by a single hour*”. (Qur’an, 16:61). Many people thought life saving drug and feeding tube with high dose painkilling injection can keep the life of terminally ill patient. In fact, life and death of everyone is in the hand of Allah, no one dies except with the Will of Allah. In this regards, Allah says: “*And no person can ever die except by Allah's leave and at an appointed term*”. (Qur’an, 3:145).

Islam advises the followers that they are created by Allah and He is the one who can give life and death. He says: “*He is the One Who has given you life, will cause you to die and then will bring you back to life again - yet man is indeed very ungrateful*”. (Qur’an, 22:66). This Qur’anic instruction emphatically reminding us about our life and death which is only in the hand of Allah and we cannot take it in our hand, otherwise Allah will not be pleased with us as our Prophet (p.b.u.h) said: “Amongst the nations before you there was a man who got a wound, and growing impatient (with its pain), he took a knife and cut his hand with it and the blood did not stop till he died.

In a hadith *Qudsi*, Allah says that “My Slave hurried to bring death upon himself so I have forbidden him (to enter) Paradise”.[[14]](#footnote-14) Therefore, active euthanasia is not allowed in Islam. Sheikh Yusuf Qaradawi said: “this act of Euthanasia is Islamically forbidden, for it compasses a positive route on the path of a physician. To end the life of the patient and hasted via lethal injection, electric shock, a sharp weapon or any other way. This is an act of killing and killing is a major sin thus forbidden in Islam, the religion of pure mercy”.[[15]](#footnote-15)

According to the International Islamic Code for Medical and Health Ethics makes clear prohibition of active euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide in article sixty-one as follows: “Human life is sacred and it should never be wasted except in the cases where shariah specified in the law. This is the question that lies completely outside the scope of the medical profession. A physician should not take an active part in terminating the life of a patient, even if it is at his or his guardian’s request, and even if the reason is severe deformity, a hopeless, incurable disease, or severe, unbearable pain that cannot be alleviated, by the usual pain killers. The physician should urge his patient to endure and remind him of the reward of those who tolerate their suffering. This particularly applies to the following cases of what is known as mercy killing, a. a deliberate killing of a person who voluntarily asks for his life to be ended. b. physician assisted suicide, c. the deliberate killing of new born infants with deformity that may or may not treated their life”.[[16]](#footnote-16)

It is clear from the preceding paragraphs that active euthanasia or physician assisted suicide is not allowed in Islam. Nevertheless, how do Muslims deal with passive euthanasia? Can Muslims refuse to seek medical treatment if they feel it does not help with healing their health condition? In this regard, one should seek medication for our prophet (p.b.u.h), said, when the Bedouins came to him and said, ‘O’ Messenger of Allah, should we seek medicine? ‘Yes, O’ slaves of Allah seek medicine, for Allah has not created a disease except that he has created its cure, except for one illness.’ They said, ‘And what is that? He said, Old age.[[17]](#footnote-17)

In a situation when the medication is proven to be useless, the majority of scholars are of the opinion that the patient should be placed in the power and will of Allah to decide his condition while at the same time medication is stopped. This is based on the hadith of Aishah, where she relates about an incident before the demise of the Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h). She stated: “We put medicine in one side of his mouth, but he started waving us not to insert the medicine into his mouth. We said: he dislikes the medicine as a patient usually does. But when he came to his senses he said: Did I not forbid you to medicine by force in side of my mouth..”.[[18]](#footnote-18)

Patients ought to show patience and resilience during sickness. This is based on the narration of Ibn Abbas Ata ibn AbiRabih, said: Ibn Abbas said to me: “May I show you a woman of Paradise? I said: Yes. He said: Here is this dark-complexioned woman. She came to Allah’s Apostle Saw and said: I am suffering from falling sickness and is become naked; supplicate Allah for me, whereupon he said: Show endurance as you can do and there would be Paradise for you and, if you desire, I supplicate Allah that he may cure you. She said: I am prepared to show endurance but the trouble is that I become naked, so supplicate to Allah that he should not let me become naked, so he supplicated for her.”[[19]](#footnote-19)

The majority of scholars (Hanafi and Maliki) said that medical treatment is *mubah* (permitted). The Shafi’is and the Hanbalis scholars opined that it is *mustahab* (recommended), they based their opinion on a hadith which says “Allah has sent down the disease and the cure, and has made for every disease the cure. So treat sickness, but do not use anything haram,” and other hadith which contain instructions to seek cures. The fact that the Prophet (p.b.u.h) used cupping and other kinds of treatment indicates that medical treatment is permitted. For the Shafi’is, treatment is *mustahab* when there is no certainty that it will be beneficial, but when treatment is certain to be beneficial (such as putting a dressing on a wound), then it is *wajib* or obligatory (an example would be blood transfusions in certain cases).[[20]](#footnote-20)

It is already stated that active euthanasia or physician-assisted suicide is not permitted in Islam. However, when the condition of a patient is hopeless and the medication seems useless, it is better to stop curing, and end the life support system. All the patient can do is now to show patience, resilience and remembrance of Allah. The Islamic Code of Medical Ethics provides the following guidance on the issues: “In his/her defense of life, however, the doctor is well-advised to realize this limit, and never to transgress it. If it is scientifically certain that life cannot be restored, then it is futile to diligently keep the patient in a vegetative state by heroic measures, or to preserve the patient by deep freezing or the artificial methods. It is the process of life, the doctor aims to maintain and not the process for dying. In any case, the doctor shall not take a positive measure to terminate the patient’s life!”[[21]](#footnote-21)

In the case of those patients whose revival is absolutely impossible, resuscitation is not allowed according to the statement of “standing committee for Academic Research and Issuing fatwas”. Since resuscitation is not allowed then leave the patients on Allah and Allah will take him when his time is opted. Identification of terminally ill patients are those: (1) if the patient is taken to the hospital and declared dead, (2) if the patient’s condition is not fit for resuscitation according to the opinion of three trustworthy specialist doctors, (3) If the patient’s sickness is chronic and untreatable, and death is inevitable according to the testimony of three trustworthy specialist doctors. (4) If the patient is incapacitated, or is in a persistent vegetative state and chronically ill, or in the case of cancer in its advanced stages, or chronic heart and lung disease, with repeated stoppages of the heart and lungs, and three trustworthy specialist doctors have determined that. (5) If there is any indication in the patient of brain injury that cannot be treated according to the reports of three trustworthy specialist doctors. (6) If reviving the heart and lungs is of no benefit and not appropriate because of a certain situation according to the opinion of three trustworthy specialist doctors.[[22]](#footnote-22)

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, Islam approaches both contraception and euthanasia with an emphasis on ethical intentions, compassion, and alignment with divine guidance. While contraception can be acceptable with responsible intent, euthanasia is largely viewed as impermissible, underscoring Islam's commitment to the sanctity and preservation of life.

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2. Trussell, J., Guthrie, K. A., & Schwarz, E. B. (2011). Contraceptive failure rates. Contraceptive technology, 20th revised edition. New York, NY: Ardent Media. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Johnson, Emily R. "Advances in Female Sterilization Techniques: A Comprehensive Review." Journal of Reproductive Health 37, no. 2 (2023): 82. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
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8. Britannica Concise encyclopedia: Encyclopedia Britannica Publishing, London: 2006, 645. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. John Griffiths & Heleen Weyers Maurice Adams, Euthanasia and law in Europe, Oxford and Portaland , Oregon, Heart Publishing, 2008, 465. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Ibid, 466. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Ibid, 468. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
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13. Ibid, 190, 392,564. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Sahih Al BukhariBook 4 : Vol. 56, Hadith 669 [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Yusuf al-Qaradawi, founder and part owner of www.IslamOnline.net, issued a fatwa that was quoted in, Living Shari'ah: Fatwah Bank" on IslamOnline.net on Mar. 22, 2005: retrieved on 5.5.2016 [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
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17. Imam IbnQayyim Al-Jauziya, Healing with the Medicine of the Prophet, By, Translated by Jalal Abu Al Rub, Edited by Adrur Rahman Abdullah, Daraussalam Publishing, 1999, p.8 [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Muḥammad ibn Ismāʻī l, Al Bukhari, AL Magazi, Translated By Muhammad Muhsin Khan, Chapter 57, No.1709 [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Sahih Muslim Book: 46, Hadith: 6736, Translated By Muhammad Muhsin Khan [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
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