

Daily Mail June
12th 2014

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Assisted suicide leaps 40% in US

ASSISTED suicides have soared by nearly 40 per cent in a US state in just one year, figures revealed yesterday.

The number of terminally ill people who died after ingesting lethal drugs in Washington state – where assisted suicide was legalised in 2008 – rose from 116 in 2012 to 159 last year.

The Death With Dignity Act came into force in the state in March 2009, allowing people judged to have six months to live or less to end their lives with the support of two doctors.

About half of those who died last year were married and three quarters had a college education.

More than 90 per cent either had cancer or a degenerative disease.

Nearly two-thirds – 61 per cent – said they wanted to die because they feared becoming a 'burden' on family, friends or carers. Others said they were afraid of 'losing autonomy' or being unable to enjoy their lives.