Abstract

*Final Exit* is an “informational aid” advocating the practice of active euthanasia and describing the proper method for the foolproof commission of suicide. Although it has been directed toward assisting the terminally ill patient who desires to terminate suffering, it has been suggested that the widespread availability of this book may result in its abuse. Specifically, there is growing concern that “do-it-yourself suicide manuals” could bring about the fruition of suicidal ideations that are relatively common among mentally ill patients and impressionable adolescents. Described is the suicidal ingestion of cyanide by a physically healthy 30-year-old man. His diary, found next to the body, contains a recipe for suicide copied verbatim from Derek Humphry’s *Final Exit*. Although the decedent's history, the scene investigation, and the external examination strongly suggest an underlying psychiatric disorder, postmortem examination disclosed minimal underlying physical disease. This case graphically illustrates the abuse potential of this literary genre. To our knowledge, this is the first case of its kind to appear in the literature. We recommend that forensic pathologists and medical investigators familiarize themselves with the methods of suicide described in *Final Exit*.
Suicidal cyanide ingestion as detailed in Final Exit, by J. H. Trestrail, III © Humana Press Inc., Totowa, NJ. Cina SJ, Raso DS, Conqradi SE: Suicidal cyanide ingestion as detailed in Final Exit. J Forensic Sci 1994;39(6):1568–1570. Coe SJ: Crimes of Love, Passion and Poison. Final Exit gives us some important options to this inevitable event.” —Richard D. Lamm (Governor). Some people want to eke out every second of life—no matter how grim—and that is their right. But others do not. I ask people with suicidal thoughts to share them with family or friends and if this does not help to call one of the hot lines or help lines listed in their local telephone book, and presented in Appendix C of this book. Please respect the true intentions of Final Exit: the right of a terminally ill person with unbearable suffering to know how to choose to die. —Derek Humphry April 1992. xvi. Is death by ingestion of cyanide the best means of self-deliverance? Is it as fast as in the James Bond movies—twelve seconds? How much pain does cyanide induce? Does it always work?