## Gehrig's disease victims consider suicide, survey says

BOSTON — More than half of victims of Lou Gehrig's disease in a two-state survey said they would consider assisted suicide.

Lou Gehrig's disease is a progressively fatal illness that eventually leaves victims unable to speak, swallow or move.

Dr. Linda Ganzini and others from the Oregon Health Sciences

University in Portland surveyed 100 victims in Oregon and Washington state. The survey was finished before Oregon's law making physician-assisted suicide legal took effect last fall.

In the survey, 56 of the patients agreed with the statement: "Under some circumstances, I would consider taking a prescription for a medicine whose sole purpose was to end my life."

Forty-four of these people said they would request a lethal prescription if that were legal.

The doctors also surveyed 91 relatives who took care of these patients. Three-quarters of them said they shared the patients' views on assisted suicide.

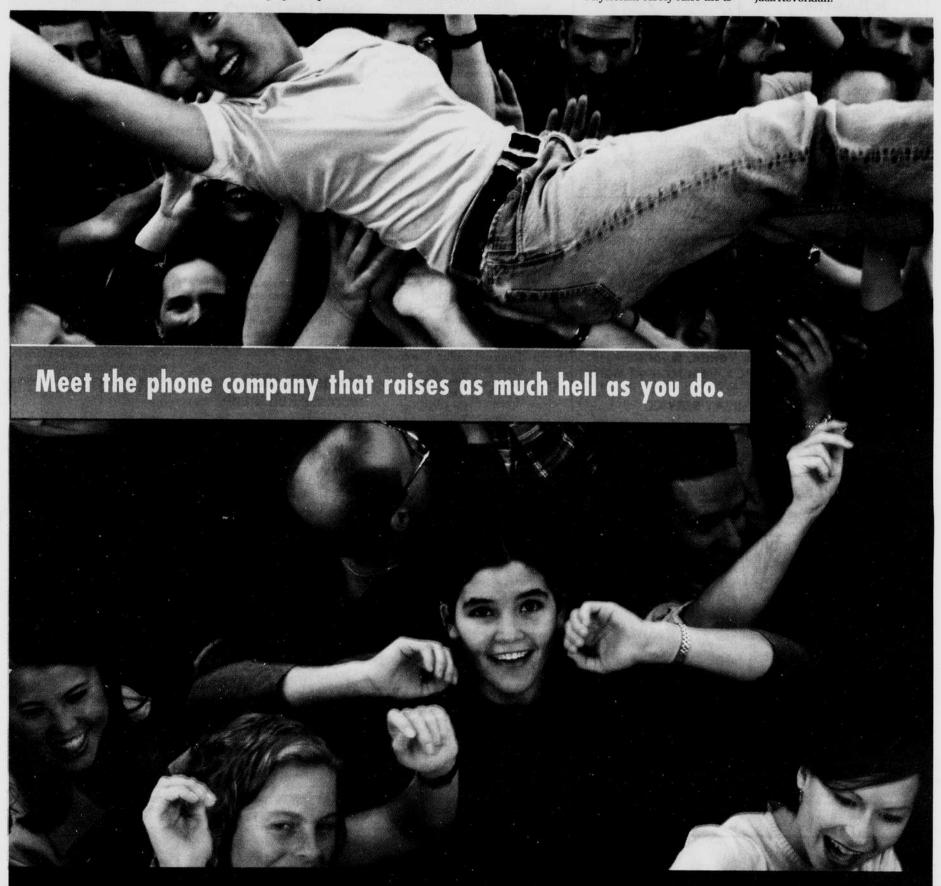
The survey was published in Thursday's New England Journal of Medicine.

An editorial by Dr. Lewis P. Rowland of Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center in New York City said many doctors never discuss the ultimate prognosis with their patients.

"Physicians rarely raise the is-

sue of assisted suicide," he wrote, "and at our ALS center, few patients ever ask about it."

One victim of the disease who did seek it was Merian Frederick, 72, of Ann Arbor, Mich. In an essay in the journal, her daughter told of Mrs. Frederick's decision to end her life with the help of Dr. Jack Kevorkian.



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