

It is 11 years since my husband died as the result of cancer, but the memories of his last 18 months are still unbearably imprinted in my head and heart.

In spite of the expert attention given to him by his doctors and nurses, he still suffered great pain which was not relieved by the treatment available to him. The treatment – medicinal, radiation and chemotherapy – all had side effects which in turn caused great distress. One of his children recently referred to the horror she had felt when seeing her father suffering so badly in his last weeks. My husband did not want his family to go through that horror. He had, in fact stated in the years before his illness, that he would not want to continue living if there was no quality of life – no joy for him or his loved ones if pain and distress dominated his emotions. He hoped that if he were in a state of intolerable suffering, that he would be able to request a legal, peaceful end to the misery of his condition. and have his request granted.

When students enter university to commence courses in nursing or medicine, they are altruistic, hoping to contribute to the healing of the minds and bodies of their future patients. It is a tragedy that when their skills are honed, they are unable to cure all who come to them, nor alleviate the pain, mental or physical, of all patients. When cases like that occur and the patient requests termination of his life, the medical team cannot comply with that request without fear of legal prosecution. They therefore have to watch with anguish the distress of the patient and his/her loved ones as a terrible prolonged dying process ensues.

Our supposedly civilized society should be more enlightened and compassionate as they are in many other countries where medically assisted dying is legally available. Why must our laws dictate that some of us will experience a long drawn out death with unrelievable suffering – torture in fact, towards the end of our days.

I send this submission with the sincere hope that our laws will be changed in line with the wishes of approximately 85% of the population.

*Patricia Mitchell*

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]