Submission 590

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To: LSIC

Subject: New Submission to Inquiry into End of Life Choices

Inquiry Name: Inquiry into End of Life Choices

Dr Jereth Kok

SUBMISSION CONTENT:

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I submit in my capacity as a medical doctor of more than 10 years experience, which includes General Practice, aged care and palliative care.

I have practised in a range of settings in metropolitan and rural Victoria.

I have managed dozens of patients at the end of their lives. I have cared for patients who have died from metastatic cancer, brain tumours, dementia, heart disease and neurological disease.

Modern palliative medicine provides the vast majority of patients with a death that is free from major suffering and distress. The drugs that we use allow pain and other distressing symptoms to be alleviated, and patients are able to be comfortably sedated during the final hours of their lives.

Physician assisted suicide (PAS) should never become legal. It is not necessary, because of the adequacy of palliative care. It goes directly against the philosophy and aims of medical care, turning physicians from agents of healing into agents of death. It irreparably damages the unique relationship of trust that exists between a patient and his or her doctor. It undermines our efforts to assist rather than abandon those who are suicidally depressed.

Pragmatically, it is unrealistic to think that PAS can be regulated so that only adult patients with terminal conditions may access it. Overseas experience shows that the legalisation of PAS leads inevitably to the euthanasia of children and people suffering from non-terminal conditions, including psychological distress.

Rather than legalise PAS, patients would benefit from being given greater autonomy to decline or withdraw from life-preserving medical treatment.

Dr. Jereth Kok, MBBS FRACGP
File1:

File2:

File3: