To Committee Inquiring into End of Life Choices

Dear Members,

Some considerations concerning the proposal to legislate for euthanasia by our parliament.

Acceptance of euthanasia is basically taking the easy way out.

Good, well-resourced palliative care supports the physical and psychological needs of the patient and their families. This care helps the dying to not only only live well in their illness but to die well too, supported and without pain.

The medical profession surely have undertaken a duty of care for their patients, ie. to care for their patients to the best of their ability, certainly not to deliberately kill them.

Those with a terminal illness may well fear visiting the doctor lest he/she may advise euthanasia as a valid option to deal with their progressive illness.

Indeed, if euthanasia is legalised there could well come a time when the treating doctor is legally bound to offer this choice, or at least refer his/her patient to a doctor who will euthanise should this recommendation violate his/her conscience.

We, as a society should be judged as to how we care for the weak and vulnerable, not by killing them. While this may well be the best option for a seriously suffering animal, it is not for a human being.

Many who are seriously ill or depressed might for a time believe that they would be better off dead. Those who are loved and valued, can be helped to manage their suffering or feelings of depression and no longer request help to end their life prematurely.

While some may say that to choose euthanasia is a matter of personal choice it always involves another person.

That person could be a relative or carer who could put pressure on vulnerable persons leading to abuse. It would also place the treating doctors in an invidious position, permanently changing the nature of patient/doctor relationships.

Whether opinion polls truly indicate support for the legalisation of euthanasia is debatable. However amongst those parliaments across the world which have seriously examined all the evidence and possible inherent dangers if euthanasia is legalised, the great majority have decided against it.

An honest examination of what is really happening in both Belgium and the Netherlands will show that although strict guidelines appear to have been applied to this legislation, abuses are clearly taking place.

For these parliaments who have legalised euthanasia, the parameters have been extended to now include not only the terminally ill but also those suffering from dementia and psychiatric illnesses and even unconscious, disabled babies. The legal safeguards of respecting the patient's wishes have clearly been side-stepped here and also led the patient to being manipulated by another.

The consequences are deadly. There are no second chances with this.

Most of us fear uncontrollable pain and becoming a burden to family and society.

Good, appropriately financed and readily available palliative care is the humane answer to care of the terminally ill.

I am a lay person but have accompanied dearly loved parents, parents-in-law and good friends in
their final stage of life. Their deaths have all been a relatively slow process. I can honestly say that it has been an immense privilege to sit beside these loved ones to reassure them and assist, where necessary, the excellent medical support given through palliative care. The experience has also been richly rewarding for family and friends. None of them was ever left in a state of unmanageable pain or distress.

Euthanasia robs those close to the dying of precious, never-to-be-repeated time together. This has been found to be an enriching experience. A last testimony of enduring love.

Good palliative care allows the patient to really die with dignity. Please do not recommend the death-dealing alternative of euthanasia.

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Sent from my iPad