End of Life Assistance (Scotland) Bill

Stella Welsh

I am opposed to the introduction of this bill on several grounds.

- Re. 16 years age limit... As a mother of 4 children ,my experience of 16 yr olds has taught me that they very rarely make good choices for life at this stage and need a huge amount of input from parents and other advisors for the simplest of decisions therefore I believe this is nonsense to expect a 16 yr old to be certain of this major choice.

- Re. safeguards. These safeguards are generally put in place to introduce Bills then removed as public opinion changes. As in 1967 Abortion act I am aware of similar 'safeguards' being introduced which are no longer in place, i.e. needing two doctors to approve the procedure. This procedure is much more available now due to criteria being changed along the way. In my opinion, this has lent itself to a huge increase in unnecessary abortion and I fear the euthanasia bill will do the same.

- As a nurse I am in daily contact with terminally ill patients and have assisted the dying with great dignity for some 30 years. I am completely and utterly in agreement with our need for better end of life care in our communities, more palliative care specialists, more funds for nurses to be in patients homes whilst they are dying, better access to services for all who need it and increased hospice availability.

I believe the introduction of this bill would go against my human rights as a nurse as all my life I have practised giving the best of care from the cradle to the grave. In my experience, nurses generally carry out doctors instructions therefore my fear would be that this task would be delegated to nursing staff .I do not see any conscience clause written into the Bill. This would cause me great distress.

I have also been witness to families making distressing decisions for their parent or child whilst having power of attorney. I fear the worst if this Bill is introduced and it is an option for some people to choose death for another. I believe it goes against Natural Law as well as God’s Law

- Impact on family. I have had experience of a patient deciding to end their life abroad and the impact on the family left behind has been devastating. As with the abortion act, someone has to deal with the aftermath whether it be spouse, siblings or children and indeed health care staff. My colleagues and I were devastated at this patient’s decision and we felt that given the chance we could have offered excellent end of life care. I believe this would be a huge problem for medical staff to deal with if this bill is introduced.

I would urge the committee reviewing this Bill to take into account my concerns.
Stella Welsh
22/3/10