End of Life Assistance (Scotland) Bill

Dr Meg Cowan, MBChB MRCGP

Having just come off the phone to a close friend who is in the terminal phase of cancer I am spurred on to write to you about my opposition to the End of Life Assistance (Scotland) Bill (SP Bill 38).

My friend is now in a Sue Ryder hospice and confided to me that 2 days ago, had he had the option, his emotional distress was such that he would have taken a pill to end his life. Today however he phoned on an afternoon visit home which he was enjoying with his wife and young family. It was clear that this time together as a family had been really important and hugely beneficial, in particular in the way the children would remember their father in years to come.

I worked as a doctor in the hospice setting for a number of years and it is my strongly held opinion that to make the premature ending of life an option is to risk these precious end of life opportunities; would put huge pressures on patients already feeling a burden to their loved ones; plus seriously damage the doctor patient relationship.

I appreciate that Margo MacDonald will be proposing this bill out of personal concerns and with compassion for others, however I strongly believe that this bill is not the way forward and is open to abuse of the most vulnerable people. As others have said, it is through extending Palliative Care services that people will be given their true worth and dignity until the end of their lives.

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