End of Life Assistance (Scotland) Bill

Anonymous

As a general practitioner, as someone who has recently cared for their husband with terminal illness and as someone who still provides ongoing care for an elderly father – in-law, I write to share some concerns about the End of Life Assistance Bill.

Experience with a husband suffering from terminal cancer

My recent experience of caring for my husband demonstrated how the excellent team working of his general practitioner, the community nurses and the local palliative care consultant enabled him to die at home with dignity and minimal distress from terminal cancer. While caring for him intensively during his final week, my daughter, son and I were able to prepare ourselves for his death and start to begin the inevitable adjustment process that lay ahead. That week was not all one of doom and gloom, there were some treasured times in it when my husband was lucid and able to share some family moment. These are valuable memories.

Experience caring for my elderly, disabled father-in-law

I am the main carer for my elderly father-in-law who has had a leg amputation and a minor stroke but who with the help of social work carers and others lives independently. He derives great pleasure from growing vegetables to eat and exhibit at the local show. He is very conscious that his continuing life places great demands on his family. Being a very considerate man, my concern would be that if the bill were passed, he would feel that he should make a case for his life being intolerable just to ease the burden on the family. As a family we derive great pleasure from his company and his approach to overcoming his disability has been an example and inspiration to others. Far from being a burden, he contributes to the wellbeing of our family and the wider community.

From the perspective of a Christian GP, who could be required to implement the bill's requirements

As a general practitioner who is a Christian and believes that life is a gift from God, I am concerned that there is no conscience clause. As I have illustrated in the instance of my husband, good palliative and terminal care is being delivered in Scotland so that one does not require life to be ended prematurely to die with dignity and minimal distress.

Given the above, I would ask the committee to very carefully consider the implications of the bill whose motives may appear good but which is likely to have unintended consequences.

Anonymous