End of Life Assistance (Scotland) Bill

Dr David Crick

As a doctor I have significant concerns about the proposed changes to the law in Scotland as any change in the law in Scotland will increase pressure for a similar change in the law in England, where I am a doctor.

As a GP I am aware it is vitally important to ensure that the patient is not under external pressure to request assisted suicide and that pressure can be imagined or real. I have seen a number of elderly exploited when they are vulnerable and therefore any medical assessments would need to be very robust to be able to pick up this sort of pressure. In particular with all the financial savings required in healthcare & social care budgets over the next 5 years or so, there will be considerable pressure on families to care and for the vulnerable elderly, especially those with little family support, the option to “end the life that is near the end” will be even more pressured.

I am already aware of the problems in the Netherlands where many cases of euthanasia are not reported and the fear engendered in the elderly towards their doctors. Therefore it is vital that there are specified procedures by which doctors would report their involvement with an assisted suicide. Without this, any law like this is open to abuse.

The proposed Bill also has no conscience clause, and this is a major weakness, as well as failing to respect the rights of those providing care, it will undermines good health care and particularly palliative medicine. Previous surveys of views of doctors have shown that the majority of doctors would not be prepared to participate in implementing the proposals of the Bill.

Finally the Bill is intended to ‘enable a person to die with dignity and a minimum of distress’ but good medical care already provides this. I firmly believe that a society which cares for its vulnerable members will have a strong future where people will look out for & care for each other, rather than strengthening the increasingly self centeredness that is prevalent.

I strongly urge you to reconsider this Bill in the light of the above.

Dr David Crick
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