End of Life Assistance (Scotland) Bill

Friends at the end

Do you agree a person should be able to request end of life assistance from a medical practitioner?

Strongly agree but there must be provision for alternatives to the need for the two formal requests to be in writing for those whose illness or disability makes writing impossible.

Are you satisfied with the requirements for age and connection with Scotland?

Persons aged between 12 and 16 should be able to make a request if supported by a parent or guardian. Persons should be registered with a medical practice in the United Kingdom for 12 months, the latest of which must be in Scotland. Persons who are terminally ill or seriously disabled may move to be near relatives/friends who could be involved in their care.

Are you satisfied with the categories of people?

Yes, in full agreement.

Stages of consent and verification process

Yes but the second designated medical practitioner should not be required to be a psychiatrist. He/she should be a medical practitioner who has been registered for at least 10 years. General practitioners are dealing daily with patients with mental health and mental capacity problems and ordinarily are considered capable of making sound judgements on these issues. Psychiatrists are very expensive (£250/300 for an OP consultation, £500 for domiciliary visit twice). Appointments have to be made many weeks ahead. Psychiatry is not a popular career option nowadays so the situation is likely to become worse.

If the designated medical practitioner had any doubts about the mental health or mental capacity of the person, the second designated medical practitioner should be psychiatrist (in line with normal medical practice).

Are the level and nature of the safeguards adequate?

Evidence from Oregon (USA), where provisions are comparable, shows no evidence of slippery slopes or abuse. We think they are adequate.
Any other considerations?

Numerous opinion polls in Scotland and the UK have shown that four out of five of the electorate believe that the law should be revised to allow assisted dying.

Friends at the end
5 May 2010