End of Life Assistance (Scotland) Bill

Anja Primbs

Please let me first of all express my deepest concern regarding the End of Life assistance (Scotland) bill.

I do not agree that a person should be able to request end of life assistance at any stage in their life. In my point of view there is no situation, no circumstance and no age which would justify ‘an assisted death’.

The bill mentions a several stage consent and verification process. My biggest fear is that not matter how detailed and apparently safeguarded a process may be, there is always the risk that people will ask for it because they do not want to become a ‘burden’ for others.

From personal experience with an elderly relative I am aware of how important it is to ensure that people at the end stages of their lives feel valued, loved and receive all the support needed to prepare themselves for this important stage in life, which we all live only once.

How often have I heard my grandmother say that she does not want to be a ‘burden’. How could she? She has given her life, her love, her time to the whole family and we all will do all we can to make sure to support her until the very last moment, the same way she has always supported us.

I agree that it is not always easy, though palliative care has proven to be a valid and important resource which has supported many patients and their relatives in the past. With the technology and resources we have nowadays is it not better to invest them in improving the care and treatment of those with terminal illness, e.g. by improving pain and symptom control and/or by improving support for carers, so that no one feels the overwhelming burden of suffering and distress rather than plan for the easy option of ending life?

It is further entirely possible that the 2nd check by doctor and Psychiatrist becomes a formality as happens in many cases with the foetal termination process. The 2nd medical practitioner may never actually see the patient, only sign the form.

I am further worried that the issue of conscientious objection has not been fully discussed in this bill, which should be not only available to medical practitioners but to all members of the medical team. Some friends, doctors, I have spoken to have voiced their concerns about having to ‘assist their patients to die’ in a way they never wanted to assist them.

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