End of Life Assistance (Scotland) Bill

Anthony Jeffers

I wish to express my opposition to the above bill.

I am a retired consultant physician having worked for the major part of my career in the Aberdeen Hospitals in acute medicine ie one the "coal-faces" of medical practice. While I recognise that people with a severe and life limiting condition, whether an illness of relative short duration or an on-going chronic condition/disability, may get to a point where they find life intolerable and wish to end their lives, I have to say that this is relatively unusual; the vast majority continue dialogue with their various advisers. The media tends to highlight high profile cases which do not represent the tragic and desperate struggle of many thousands of patients who deal with their "terminal time" bravely and with great fortitude fortunately without media intrusion.

I believe that the bill would undermine the special relationship between a patient and their medical advisers.

It seems likely that some lives would be considered to have less meaning or worth. Elderly or disabled people may feel under pressure to seek an earlier death so as not to be a burden on family/carers.

You will be aware that the Royal Collages and the BMA are oppose to the bill.

I am also concerned that the Bill may open the door not just to Physician assisted Suicide but also to euthanasia as the bill states that "End of Life Assistance means assistance, including the provision or administration of appropriate means to die with dignity and a minimum of distress". I would understand that the likely administrator would be the physician who has to be physical present.

There is no guidance on what constitutes "appropriate means". Training would have to be given in the medical schools and after, as well as appropriate supervision. There is no mention of any specified procedures by which doctors would report their involvement with an assisted suicide.

The bill indicates the second request may be made after 15 days from the notification of the approval of the first formal request. After approval of the second formal request 2 clear days must elapse before the final event. This period of time could therefore be as short as two to three weeks.

I urge the committee to consider the above points.

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