I speak to you as a concerned Christian Doctor who has devoted himself to the care of others. I have had personal experience of end of life decisions for many years having worked as an Accident and Emergency physician for 10 years.

I regularly attend patients who are critically ill and for whom judgements are made regarding the whether to resuscitate based on the likely success of the interventions contemplated.

It is my conclusion that though physicians differ in their views of how much intervention to instigate for such people there is an overwhelming antipathy that the role of the medical profession should include inflicting death on others. To me, this is more akin to the Nazi ‘doctors’ who were essentially not healers but cruel sadists.

It is one thing for a person to voluntarily take away their own lives. It is another to involve the caring, healing profession in killing others.

We in Accident and Emergency have to make split second decisions on whether to intervene to save life. Not because it is not worth saving. Every life is valuable. Your life, committee member, is valuable and it is our sincere hope that should any of you or your families be in my locality and were taken to Accident and Emergency we would care for you to our utmost and fight for your and your families lives and comfort.

Consider the following scenario—if you pass this bill into law and some poor person who is suffering terribly with a chronic condition takes their own lives as a result. Soon afterwards a cure is discovered for that condition? What a tragedy for that person and what a thing to have on ones conscience?

To improve peoples experience, to reduce their suffering is not hypothetical. We recall the famous case in New York in the 1960’s of encephalitis lethargica patients which was dramatized in the film ‘Awakenings’—No hope was given to those people who had remained in their affected state for a long time. The change from a seeming vegetative state to a normal functioning interactive state was temporary but you know giving those people ‘joie de vivre’ for that short time was worth it. It is very wrong to adopt the essential principle of this bill which is not to improve the quality of peoples lives but just to kill them instead. Your life, my life is worth more than that. I urge you to reject and not to recommend this legislation.

Dr D J Mackay (Employee of NHS Fife)
12 May 2010