End of Life Assistance (Scotland) Bill

Ellen Will

The laws of our country exist to protect the vulnerable in our society. This Bill would put the elderly, the sick and the disabled at risk as the 'dependency' clause in Section 4 could include many who live with a varying degree of dependency on family and/or care agencies.

It could encourage the elderly, particularly, to seek assisted suicide in order not to be a financial or emotional burden on relatives or carers.

Our right to demand care and support to live with dignity however dependent we might be would be undermined.

I have read the terms of this Bill repeatedly but can find no 'conscience clause' for our doctors. Under the terms of this Bill they would have the responsibility of providing 'assisted suicide', by methods undefined by the Bill. The BMA does not support assisted suicide nor do other professional medical bodies.

The majority of our doctors would not be prepared to participate in implementing the proposals of this Bill. There should never be a duty for doctors or others to help people kill themselves.

We do have a duty to alleviate suffering, but by killing the pain not the patient. We should be seeking to fund wider availability of palliative care for those who need it, ensuring for them a dignified and peaceful death.

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