The End of Life Assistance Bill Committee
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

3rd May 2010

End of Life Assistance Bill

We believe in the sanctity of human life and could not support a law which permits one to end a life (even one's own) or to assist another to do so.

The value of human life cannot be assessed or measured. Legalising assistance to end human life today could so easily move on in a few years' time, with changes in public opinion, to non-voluntary euthanasia for those who are a burden or expense on society or who are perceived to have no remaining worthwhile existence. This process has already begun in the killing of thousands of unborn babies. Do we really want Scotland to be known as a place where life is not valued?

The medical profession should not be put into a position where they are expected to provide services aimed at ending a life.

- Doctors, since time immemorial, have sought to preserve life. To ask them to take life would not only go against their professional calling but could put them in legal difficulties should they wish to withdraw from offering advice or assistance.
- The proposals appear to have given some thought to safeguards but the procedures envisaged will take much time which would be better spent helping those who need medical care. Waiting times to see a doctor can only increase if doctors have to spend time with several discussions and reports all of which must be undertaken in the last six months of the patient's life.
- Opinions we have read from those caring for the terminally ill state that suffering can be reduced or eliminated, and that the atmosphere found in hospices is loving and fully supportive of the patients and their family. We already have the means to "enable a person to die with dignity and a minimum of distress".
- Having undergone two major operations in the last 16 months I can speak highly of the medical care provided by NHS staff. But not one of those staff took an interest in my mental state beyond the nominal greeting "How are you today?". Despite a written request to see a hospital chaplain I never received such a visit, except from personnel from my own church. So I am unconvinced that the medical profession is in any shape to cope with the spiritual, emotional or ethical issues surrounding 'end of life' issues.
- We understand that professional bodies, such as the BMA, do not support assisted suicide.

The term finding life intolerable is so subjective that it cannot be used reliably to grant a wish to end life, and the methods by which a life could be ended are not identified.

Aspects of the procedures leave things open to misunderstanding or abuse. Each request must have two independent witnesses who must also each make a statement that the patient understands the nature of the request, is making the request voluntarily and is not acting under any undue influence. [Appendix 1]. How can anyone understand fully the nature of such a request, nor can they be 100% sure that the request is made without any undue influence.

Please would you give due consideration to our views expressed above and prevent this Bill from becoming law in Scotland.

Yours sincerely

Keith Morris