COPY OF LETTER SENT TO MSPs

To whom it may concern,

As a registered doctor, I am writing to express our concerns about the End of Life Choices (Scotland) Bill being proposed by Margo MacDonald MSP.

Firstly, it seems unnecessary to support this bill when both Westminster and the Scottish Parliament have rejected recent and repeated attempts, under Lord Joffe and Jeremy Purvis MSP respectively, to decriminalise assisted suicide.

Secondly, the British Medical Association and other colleges have do not support physician assisted suicide. Why should they have to implement a bill which they do not support, which, we are told, makes no allowance for personal conscience, and which would fundamentally alter the doctor-patient relationship?

Thirdly, the bill is vague; it could encompass those who are dependant upon others, who suffer chronic disabilities, or simply those who find life 'intolerable'- howsoever that should be defined?

As such, it would prove very difficult to regulate. From reports in the Netherlands and Oregon, abuses do occur: assistance has given to the depressed, or the very young, in Europe as physicians have overstepped the legal boundaries. In Oregon, doctors are expected to 'self-report' and that these reports are not necessarily investigated.

Finally, we as a society have a responsibility to care for those who are old, vulnerable or terminally ill. Introducing a 'right to die' and expecting Scottish doctors to implement this in practice would fundamentally alter society's attitude to those most in need of our help, and change the face of the medical profession forever. It would send the signal to some that, yes, their lives are not worth living. It would open a dark door, which would prove near impossible to shut.

My grandfather has a terminal head and neck tumour. Following his chemotherapy, he experienced profound cardiac failure and lay, so we thought, dying in bed for over a week. He gave up the will to live, and longed to die. An estate GP diagnosed acute cardiac failure and with the administration of some diuretic, he returned to solid health. He has since spent a whole year travelling around the country he so loves, spending time and going on holidays with his six daughters and numerous grandchildren and great grandchildren. As I write he is exploring the East Coast of Scotland and enjoying a glorious Spring!
What would have happened to him if assisted suicide was an option last year?

I would urge you to resist this bill, however euphemistically it is presented.

Anonymous
End of Life Assistance (Scotland) Bill

Response from

Do you agree a person should be able to request end of life assistance from a registered medical practitioner?

Never- neither a registered medical practitioner nor anyone else.

Are you satisfied with the requirements for age and connection with Scotland as set out in the Bill?

No. See above.

Are you satisfied with the two categories of people who would qualify to be assisted under the terms of the Bill?

No. Again, see above. Furthermore the criteria are vague, ambiguous and the safeguards are untested and inadequate.

The Bill outlines a several stage consent and verification process that would be required to be followed for an eligible person to receive end of life assistance. Are you satisfied with this process?

No, no process or safeguards could ever be sufficient to avoid abuses or unintended outcomes.

Do you consider the level and nature of safeguards as set out in the Bill to be appropriate?

No, no process or safeguards could ever be sufficient to avoid abuses or unintended outcomes.

Do you have any other considerations on the Bill not included in answers to the above questions?

Yes – please see the following letter which I have sent to my MSPs.