

In terms of the social impact of making physician assisted dying/euthanasia legal, I feel it could open the door to serious abuse, especially in this time of extreme economic inequality.

Life is not valued in our world as much as it should be. Elderly people here could be seen as a burden on society. When one opens a door a crack to an idea, it is easier to shove it wider and wider.

Many young people are not being taught to respect people and property, and are being taught to blame their lack of opportunity on the Baby Boomers' lack of economic and ecological responsibility. They are being fed a no hope diet by the media and often by their school systems.

Baby Boomers are our "seniors" now, and constitute the largest percentage of seniors at any time in our history. Care of the elderly is costly, and is often expressed by the media as a growing burden on society. World food and fuel resources are dwindling and the population continues to grow.

In these circumstances the elderly could be viewed as an unnecessary burden, using up limited resources, and being old is something we have been conditioned to believe is bad. Youthfulness is highly prized in our society. In this light it may be easy to consider putting us out of our misery, or more likely someone else's misery.

What if a wealthy person needs an organ, a doctor is bribed, you are kept comatose and your family is told there is no hope and that sustaining you would be cruel, and tells them that your organs could benefit so many.

Medical costs are rising and medical resources are diminishing - or so we are told.

Euthanasia is a Pandora's Box that I don't want to open, but if we open it, it should be opened with caution. Slopes do have a downward slide, don't they?

I feel strongly that systems of Palliative care need to be put in place for everyone. As of now for 70-80% of Canadians palliative care is not available, that is unconscionable. This puts people at great risk of taking their own lives, or seeking out other places where they can get this service. Once all aspects of palliative care have been tried only then should the person have the right to ask for assisted dying.

I also feel strongly that the physician who gives the approval for assistance to die should not be the doctor who is carrying it out. Once the person is dead, they cannot tell us whether they chose this route or not, so having an uninvolved physician carry out the act is another way of protecting the patient from abuse.

In terms of organ donations, the person should have filled out and signed - or have signed for them by an uninvolved witness if they are unable to sign - to ensure that their organs will not be taken without their authority, that is killed for their organs.

The issue of doctors having to carry out assisted death is another concern. If a doctor says it is against my conscience, morals, religion or whatever their reason is, he or she should not be forced to, nor should he or she have to refer the patient to someone who will, as that is like assisting the person to end their life anyway.

In terms of competence, I feel that if the person approaches a physician who does not know them well, more time should be taken to ensure that the person has no other options, has tried palliative care, and is certain that they want to go this route. Doctors don't always know their patients beyond their presenting problem(s.) The day that patient comes to see a doctor they may be very depressed, stressed etc., and perhaps may need counselling to ensure that they are making a rational choice and given time to consider all options.

All provinces should have equal systems of health care for the people of Canada, a person should not have to go shopping around. Access to palliative care is fractured in our country, we need fuller freer access for all peoples. We need to legislate the right to palliative care for every Canadian.

Ending a life should not be the focus of quality of life, that is an oxymoron.

Sincerely,

Beatrice Cleary