

January 30, 2016

Subject: Special Joint Committee on Physician-Assisted Dying

I have practiced as a Registered Nurse in Alberta for over forty years. My clinical experience has been very diverse including many areas such as Emergency, Intensive Care, Medical, Surgical, Rehabilitation, Hematology, Psychiatric and Staff Health. I am currently working with General Internal Medicine patients in an acute care setting. I have dealt with death and dying in a myriad of situations and realize how unique and complex this process can be.

I have followed with great interest the right to die issue. I know for certain that one of the most CRUCIAL steps on this historical change is CLEAR and COMPASSIONATE COMMUNICATION.

I believe the current language being used does NOT MEET THIS CRITERIA.

The term Euthanize most often refers to animals. The term Assisted Suicide offends many people on a personal, religious and cultural level. More recently the term Physician assisted death (PAD) is being used. This terminology (PAD) is too confusing; as PAD is also known as peripheral artery disease, panic anxiety disorder and psychiatric advanced directive. These words can be biased and destructive.

A major, historical change requires NEW and Humanitarian terminology. A language that speaks to ALL people.

I propose we RENAME this to:

RELEASE OF LIFE FOR REFRACTORY AND INTOLERABLE SUFFERING, or  
RELEASE OF LIFE AGREEMENT.

This simple change in wording is compassionate, inclusive and non-biased. I would appreciate the committee's opinion on this delicate subject.

Thank you for all of your on going efforts to explore this topic and to speak in a common language that will serve ALL Canadians.

Kind Regards,  
Mary Widas, RN