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From: HEATHER PETERSON

Sent: February 7, 2016 12:03 AM

To: Physician-Assisted Dying Committee Comité Aide médicale à mourir

Subject: Special Joint Committee on Physician-Assisted Dying

Dear Committee Members

I am pleased to have this opportunity to share my thoughts with you on the subject of physician assisted dying. I feel strongly that individuals who are dealing with a serious and/or terminal illness must be allowed to end their lives as they choose.

Personally, I have watched my brother and my father die in the present system over a long period of time. I do not fear death but I fear dying in the same manner as they did. My brother had a kidney transplant when he was in his early thirties. He died when he was 64. For most of those years he lived a full and happy life. As he entered his 60's, he developed secondary cancers and around 62 his kidney failed and he went on dialysis. His health deteriorated until he came to the point he could no longer tolerate the pain and continuous medical interventions that kept him alive. He decided to hospitalize himself with a DNR order and refused food and medication. It took him six days to die during which time he was in great pain, had several strokes and was unaware of the presence of his family.

My father suffered from dementia and lived in a long term care facility. He received excellent care but all memories of his former self were gone. He was completely unaware of his own identity and did not recognize any members of his family. I know for certain that my Dad would have chosen physician assisted dying had it been available to him. I know for certain because when he was a healthy man he always said he would rather die than live in an institution when he was old.

I ask that the procedure you put in place for physician assisted dying be clear, straight forward and easily accessible. Dying people and their families should not be harassed and given the run around by a bureaucracy. Dying itself provides sufficient suffering.

I do believe that some safeguards should be in place to ensure the applicant is fully informed and knowledgeable about their choices. Some physicians may be opposed to assisted dying which is their right. But they must not be allowed to stop the patient from gaining access to their own right to die. Please ensure that dissenting doctors be required to refer the patient to doctors who are accepting of the law.

I think it could be beneficial for the patient to speak to their own physician and also to another doctor before the decision is made. This would offer the opportunity to gain a second opinion on their health and prognosis. In remote areas where physicians are scarce and services restricted, other medical staff may need to be designated to assist in the process.

I ask that you also ensure that a person can request physician assisted dying for their future selves. By this I mean that a healthy individual can make a legally binding request for future physician assisted dying should their medical condition change to a point where they would consider it to be intolerable, i. e. dementia, terminal cancer, Parkinson's Disease, to name just a few possibilities.

It has taken decades for this law to finally come into effect. The right to have the power over my own death makes me optimistic about my future. I thank the committee for their hard work and look forward to seeing the development of a caring and supporting pathway to assisted dying.

Heather Peterson