

Dr. Geoffrey Purdell-Lewis

Brief to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights.

I am writing this short Brief to express my concerns regarding aspects of Bill C-7 which amends parts of the present legislation governing medical assistance in dying as contained in the Criminal Code.

1. Death may not be reasonably foreseeable – this is akin to booking medical assistance in dying without knowing what the future holds. There could be new effective treatments or medications, or the patient could simply decide that life was not so bad after all and, if alive may wish to revoke his/her agreement for medical assistance in dying.
2. Approval by only one independent witness – I would recommend that two independent witnesses are needed in order to ‘keep each other honest’ and it would be even better if the two independent witnesses are strangers to each other and that both have a sound knowledge of mental health problems, diagnoses, and outcomes.
3. Mental health challenges. Mental health problems are well known to wax and wane and one such that at one point in time the ‘patient’ is down and depressed and only wishes to end his/her life and sees no future. Some weeks or months later the patient may well be ‘balanced’ or possibly manic and medical assistance in dying may be furthest from their minds. And why? It may be that the patient had simply stopped taking their medication or their change in status was part of the nature of the mental health problem itself.
4. The proposed changes in the Act will allow accelerated medical assistance in dying such that the individual in question may not have sober second thought in medical assistance in dying and to think through very carefully and discuss with family the proposed matter of physician assisted suicide. There is the potential of ‘same day death’ and if I may say it, this is no way to end one’s life. A much more serious issue is one of potential abuse with ‘same day death’ and there is no going back once death has taken place. A time for ‘sober second thought’ is needed such as the present 10 days.

Respectfully submitted,

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