Another euthanasia bill - like others around Australia

A mixed group of NSW politicians have spent two years putting together their Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill 2017. A woman with motor neuron disease is championing the bill to justify and sanction its despairing content. In displaying her photo central to the discussion of the bill, the Sydney Morning Herald presented the drafting hope that it would ease ‘also the distress experienced by friends, families and loved ones’. Euthanasia is to solve everyone’s problems.

This 2017 Bill calls for persons as young as 25 and expected to die within 12 months from their illness to be able to request their doctor provide them with a lethal drug. Another doctor (a specialist) will have to sign off on the poison decision and a psychologist or psychiatrist will have to declare they are of sound mind. The person requesting death doesn’t have to be in pain.

The demographic and medical profile of persons seeking to self-poison, however, requires consideration. The Medical Journal of Australia, March 2017, published research building the profile of the self-poisoning person. The MJA introductory editorial states ‘despite the size of the problem it has received relatively little public attention, with almost an unspoken suggestion that suicide is a life choice or a consequence of ageing. Yet, as the authors acknowledge, most older patients admitted to hospital after self-poisoning have a history of mental illness’.
God of Life,

At the beginning of creation your Spirit hovered over the waters, to sanctify the seas and the land. Through the resurrection of Jesus you have filled us with the same light. May we always walk as radiant witnesses to your love, your mercy, your tender care and justice.

Research suggests the desire to self-poison should be viewed from a mental and social health perspective

Research findings:

1. The length of hospital stay for older persons who have - deliberately or otherwise - poisoned themselves but survived decreased from 46 hrs to 26 hrs. for older persons. Hospitalization duration for younger persons self-poisoning remained constant over the same 26 years of the study from 1987 to 2012. It is difficult to see how 26 hours of hospital admission, spanning acute unwellness due to toxic effects and recovery could delve into the background causes of the self poisoning. Loneliness, isolation, depression, cognitive decline and even external pressures could not be effectively diagnosed referred and managed all in the same 26 hours.

2. 500 admissions in the older >65s cohort (80%) had involved deliberate self-poisoning, and 24 hospital deaths. The number who overdosed and perished without hospital admission were not visible in this study.

3. 38% of older patients in this study had a history of psychiatric illness. One third of those over 65 yrs had a history of past suicide attempts and 25% reported past alcohol or drug misuse. The authors observe loneliness, social isolation, family friction and financial worries are also risk factors for suicide.

4. Suicidal intent and a lethal outcome were more common in the older cohort of over 65 year-olds.

‘Where is the public awareness campaign about about the mental health of older people’

Malcolm Hopwood’s editorial in the Medical Journal of Australia also observes that while the older population in Australia is growing, and there is an abundance of mental health campaigns and suicide awareness-raising promotions, very little attention and awareness is paid to the older group of persons at significant risk of self harm. The current ‘Better Access to Mental Health Care Scheme’ is designed to improve mental health and reduce suicidality, however only 8% of its funding finds its way to those over 60 years of age. Pirkis J. Itanou M et al. Evaluation of the Better Access to Psychiatrists, Psychologists and GPs through the Medicare Benefits Schedule Initiative. S Study of Consumers and EvaluationUniversity of Melbourne 2010. http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/content/mental-ba-eval-a .

The findings of a 26 year evaluation of self-poisoning in a population of half million people in the HunterNewcastle region gives a patient profile.

The Catholic Church celebrates human life and the family more than perhaps any other institution in today’s world. CATHOLICSCOMEHOME.org
Penny Wong says ‘Separation of Church and State’ supports her claim that Christians should not debate moral issues in society. Christians should remove from such discussions to maintain equity.
This is not Separation of Church and State but separation of Christians from the State.

‘Self-poisoning prevention efforts may be better directed to protecting our expanding population of older citizens’ Pillans P, Page C et al. Self poisoning by older Australians: a cohort study. MJA 2017; 206: 164-169

A ‘NSW Parliamentary Working Group’ comprised of pro-euthanasia identities is overseeing consultation regarding this new “Assisted Dying” bill. Submissions will be kept secret and not published. The wider society will be informed but not consulted. What are they afraid of? Catholics?
The processes outlined in the draft bill take no account of the demographic profile of the person seeking poison. The evidence based medicine of poison-seeking disease in a half million population group bears respect. The messages sent to those with a terminal diagnosis are: alleviate the suffering of relatives and friends who may have to go with you through this illness; you have a right to get poison from your doctor; a small percentage of mental health care is spent on over 65 year-olds; we’ll give you one day in hospital if you survive self-poisoning.
Beyond Blue and Black Dog messages are now discarded.

With my whole heart I seek thee; let me not wander from thy commandments. I have laid up thy word in my heart, that I might not sin against thee.
Blessed be thou Oh Lord, teach me thy statutes! With my lips I declare all the ordinances of thy mouth
Psalm 119 vs 10-13
Time and again Jesus bears us on his shoulders. No one can strip us of the dignity bestowed upon us by this boundless and unfailing love.

Let us not flee from the resurrection of Jesus, let us never give up, come what will. May nothing inspire more than his life, which impels us onward.

Pope Francis

Nikki Gemmell: ‘Was this very modern death empowerment or despair?’ Weekend Australian 18/3/2017

The Bill’s terminology is vague and imprecise, falling over itself to dress up poison and scrub clean both murder and suicide: ‘The Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill 2017 is a Bill that provides for physician-assisted dying, not voluntary euthanasia’. I have no idea what this means: Palliative care assists the patient who is dying, eases the symptoms of the terminal illness. Palliative care does not intend death. Prescribing poison calculated to be lethal is euthanasia and is also murder. The Bill makes this legal. The doctor, patient or some other person can administer a lethal dose of poison, at a time and place chosen by the client, without penalty once the paper work is signed off. A soulless diary booking. It creates confusion to trap unsuspecting support and paints misery and pity as the face of terminal illness, able to destroy and banish our dignity.

The rate of euthanasia in Belgium increased significantly from 2007 to 2013, when tallies are taken, from 1.9% of total deaths in that country to 4.6% of total Belgian deaths. Over 1 out of every 25 persons’ deaths are from deliberate poisoning. Also, more than one in 10 ‘hastened deaths’ are without an explicit request from the patient. New Eng Jour Med correspondence 19/3 15

While we need facts when faced with untruths before parliament, let us not forget we need relationship with God first.

Pope Francis inspirations for 2017:

- Take care of you spiritual life, your relationship with God, because this is the backbone of everything we do and everything we are.
- Take care of your family life, giving your children and loved ones.. Your time attention and love.
- Take care of your relationship with others, transformimg your faith into life and your words into good works.
- Watch out for laziness that leads to existential euthanasia and for complaining which leads to desperation.

Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception pray for us.

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