WE OPPOSE PHYSICIAN ASSISTED SUICIDE

Physician assisted suicide is wrong in principle, and in practice would lead to innumerable negative consequences.

Minnesota House file 1930 (HF1930), authored by Mr. Mike Freiberg and others, provides legal protection to doctors who prescribe deadly doses of drugs to hasten the death of patients. This legislation is a project of individuals, and of “Compassion and Choices”, whose goal is to legalize assisted suicide. Our patients are not asking us for this!

We need to:

 - build a culture in which doctors and other caregivers know their patients well

 - explain what interventions may be useful

 - explain what interventions may be of no benefit or may even be withdrawn in some circumstances. Conversations about prognosis, as well as predictions of mortality are fraught with uncertainty.

 It is unreasonable to end life based on the inexact practice of estimating a prognosis. In the current culture of fragmented and highly specialized care, and a shortage of primary care doctors, this practice will be abused. There is abundant information about the consequences of similar legislation from Canada and other countries. The AMA does not support physician assisted suicide.

 While states such as Oregon collect information on the practice, some questions cannot be adequately answered by available data. In the case of a patient who receives a prescription for deadly drugs but changes their mind and does not use them, it is not possible to know if someone else uses the drugs. Patients will feel coerced, especially when some potential treatments are more expensive than poisons to end their lives.

Law is a teacher. This law teaches that human life in a vulnerable state can be unworthy of life. It teaches that a profession esteemed for healing, can be corrupted into hastening death. Conscience obligates us to oppose laws which are contrary to the common good. We oppose this legislation.

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