

Submission into the Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill 2021

Submission No.: 183
Submitted by: [REDACTED]
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Position: I/We support the Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill
Comments in relation to: Safeguards
Attachments: No attachment

Submitter Comments:

Terminally ill patients reach a point whereby the use of heavy medications, including Opioids make it difficult for them to function. The process for choosing VAD for oneself should NOT be more onerous than the requirements and checks established when the terminally ill are preparing their wills, or their Power of Attorneys. If the process becomes too bureaucratic and difficult, it may become outside the physical capacities of many terminally ill, thus depriving them (by raising overly burdensome obstacles) of the dignity of a death of their voluntary choosing.

I present the examples of my poor mother, who simply wanted to set up a Power of Attorney for me to manage her final affairs. In order to meet the requirements of lucidity and voluntary capacity for a POA, we had to schedule a non-pain medication window for my mother. ie: no opioids and significant pain as a result. It was horrible to watch her crying in pain, just trying to get her personal affairs in order.

The hospital had Justice of the Peace representatives available to patients. In order to manage her affairs, and establish POA and medical requests, she was forced to leave her ICU bed, sit downstairs upright for almost 2 hours, in extreme pain (we lay her down at one point to vary her seating/ pain location), simply to have a Justice of the Peace witness her POA requests. This was on the back of several days of organisation of paperwork and processes. To the committee, this short time may not sound significant, but hospitals are not legal offices and the burden on patients physically and mentally as they try to execute their own independent wishes is significant.

Although safeguards are required as part of VAD, please be mindful to not cause unnecessary administrative obstacles. For the dying such obstacles literally equate with physical pain, additional duress and unjust difficulties. Respecting the rights and wishes of these poor dying people who simply want the ability to choose their own end to their suffering, with voluntarily chosen dignity, also includes not creating bureaucratic barriers which translate to actual physical pain in their attempts to meet such requirements.

Kind regards,
[REDACTED]