

Submission into the Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill 2021

Submission No.: 1123
Submitted by: Eveline Goy
Publication: Making the submission and your name public
Position: I/We support the Voluntary Assisted Dying Bill
Comments in relation to: Eligibility criteria*
Attachments: No attachment

Submitter Comments:

I believe that it is important to allow a person to have a choice at their time of death, especially given that we have no choice when it comes to our birth. I will not comment on the suitability of assisted dying as compared to suicide, because this topic is overly complex and difficult to contain within strict boundaries, but I am of the view that people who suffer continuously, or who are in their final days and have no prospect of improving their lives, ought to be given the option of dying without pain and with dignity.

I cared for my mother at the end of her life. She was diagnosed with breast cancer in her eighties and was told it was quite possible that the cancer would develop only slowly. If so, she would be more likely to die of old age/natural causes rather than of the illness. She rejected any form of treatment and went on with her life. Within a couple of years the cancer had grown dramatically and she was suffering greatly; it became dispersed throughout her body. I went to live with her and became her carer. She had discussed her options with her GP, who had assured her that he would not allow her to suffer. She said that if she had a stroke or a similar event, she would not want to be revived but be allowed to die peacefully. One night she fell on her way to the bathroom, and fractured her femur very badly. She had said she wanted to die at home and I was prepared to be there for her, but she had to be taken to the hospital. Because of the gravity of her fracture she had to be operated on and I was informed that she might not survive the intervention. I discussed this with my siblings and we had no real choice other than allowing the surgery, despite the risk, given the amount of pain she was in. My mother contracted pneumonia after the operation and fell into a coma within a day or so. Had she been still looked after by her own doctor he would have ensured that she remained free of pain and anguish, as she had asked. The hospital doctors would not consider this matter other than through their strict guidelines: I discussed this with my mother's GP but he said he had no influence on hospital ground. My mother remained in a coma for several days, a distressing sight for all of us as the progress of the pneumonia was frightening to see, and there was no hope at all for her. She was medicated for her pain but still lived for several days, in that coma.

My mother had been very elegant and cared for her appearance. I could not stay and watch her for the whole length of time until her death and felt upset that I had been unable to remain there and see her passing. She was kept in a shared room for a while with a poor woman who had to hear her continuous and loud, dreadful death rattle. My brother kindly asked the staff to make my mother comfortable in a single room for the sake of this poor woman. We had all loved our mother immeasurably and would have wished for her to have a better death. We know that death is inevitable and must be accepted, but we felt that my mother should have been afforded the choice of dying with more dignity, especially given this was what she had wanted. I hope that this bill will ensure responsible carers of dying people are able to protect their last wishes, something that will also make grieving a less harrowing process for those who are left behind.