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HEALTH CARE

Canada Psychiatrists: Refusing Euthanasia for Mentally Ill Is 'Discrimination'

By WESLEY J. SMITH | March 16, 2020 11:39 AM



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Patient beds at a medical facility. (Mike Blake/Reuters)

Dedicated psychiatrists are often the only defense between patients with serious mental illness and suicide. But legalizing euthanasia shifts thinking 180 degrees because *suicide has been redefined as health care and a right*. Hence, protections — such as barring administered death to the mentally ill — soon **come to be seen as obstacles**.

That has happened in Canada, where the government is **erasing** its weak provision that death must be “reasonably foreseeable” requirement to qualify for killing. Once that provision is repealed, psychiatric conditions diagnosed “irremediable” could qualify for death.

This is the context in which the Canadian Psychiatric Association has warned the government not to “discriminate” against the mentally ill by barring them from lethal jabs when the law is changed. **From the Association’s Position Statement** (my emphasis):

2. Patients with a psychiatric illness *should not be discriminated against solely on the basis of their disability*, and should have available the same options regarding MAiD [medical assistance in dying, i.e., euthanasia] as available to all patients.

3. Psychiatrists will be mindful of the medical ethical principles as they relate to MAiD. They *should not allow personal opinion or bias to sway patients who wish to consider MAiD as an option for addressing irremediable conditions*.

4. While psychiatrists may choose not to be involved with the provision of MAiD, patients requesting MAiD must be *provided with information regarding available MAiD resources and the referral process...*

The CPA will continue to protect the rights and interests of patients with psychiatric conditions at all times, and with particular attention to the issues of decisional capacity, informed consent and irremediable conditions in the legislation and evolving landscape of MAiD. The CPA will advocate for the inclusion of appropriate safeguards in processes, protocols, procedures and legislation pertaining to provision of MAiD.

So last line of defense protecting the mentally ill against suicide will be *required by their Association’s ethics rules to cooperate in the very act they were once duty-bound to prevent*, and indeed, participate in the euthanasia of eligible psychiatric patients by providing information about the process, and either killing them or referring them to a doctor who will. And they are not allowed to try to talk patients out of dying because that would be “bias.”





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