

SB 116

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The committee has heard my testimony on SB 167, related to problems in assessing the competence of patients requesting to die. On SB 116, I will provide a brief listing of facts demonstrating a wide gap between the compassionate ideals of assisted suicide, and actual practice, as it is evolving.

Eight percent of all infant deaths in the Netherlands are by lethal injection. That's about 80 per year. The Dutch supreme court has ruled that otherwise-healthy, depressed individuals can request to be put to death by their doctors.

Thirty-one percent of Dutch pediatricians have euthanized children, a stunning fifth of these *without* parental consent. Of course, it's unclear just how parents derive the right to order their children to be killed.

Half of all of Belgium's nurses working with euthanasia patients admitted in a survey that they had participated in killing patients without request or consent.

Quite often, depression is a significant factor affecting any exercise of the "right to die." Forty percent of cancer patients are depressed. A study in the Netherlands indicated that cancer patients who are clinically depressed are four times as likely to request assisted suicide, as non-depressed patients. To illustrate the poor reliability of psychiatric diagnosis, we can note that one study found that, between 1997 and 2003, the number of outpatient diagnoses of bipolar in the U.S. increased by 4000 percent!

There are alarming trends in America. In 1982 in Indiana, a couple had a Down's Syndrome baby with a tracheal-esophageal fistula, a condition common in Down's, which prevented the infant from feeding. The condition is easily corrected by surgery, but the parents refused. The matter quickly found its way into the courts, and the Indiana Supreme Court affirmed the parents' right to refuse the surgery. By then, couples had stepped forward, wishing to adopt the child. The child died after a week, before the U.S. Supreme Court could take up the issue.

The personalities in the forefront of the assisted suicide movement are ghoulish. Derek Humphrey, founder of the Hemlock society, has had two wives die of suicide. His second wife had indicated that Humphrey had smothered his first wife. Dr. Philip

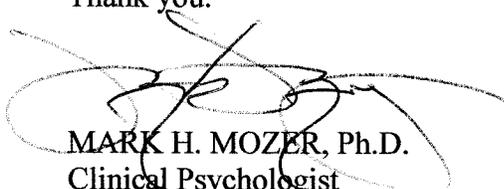
Nitschke of Australia markets plastic "Exit" bags, a "peaceful pill" (Nembutal), which he said should be available in supermarkets, and he has stated that "*all people qualify* (for suicide), not just those with the training, knowledge, or resources to find out how to 'give away' their life."

Mr. Ludwig Minelli, head of the Swiss Dignitas clinic, characterizes suicide as a "marvelous opportunity" that shouldn't be restricted to the terminally ill, or even people with severe disability.

At times, the "assistants" have finished the job, when the process was too slow. Names of Americans who have killed their wives in the guise of assisted suicide include Dr. Peter Rosier, and Bob Harper. Both were acquitted at trial.

Assisted suicide: compassionate in the abstract, dark and ugly in actuality.

Thank you.



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