



Euthanasia Prevention Coalition

NEWSLETTER

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Vigil for Internet suicide victim in Ottawa

On April 19, one year after Carlton University student Nadia Kajouji was found dead, her parents held a vigil in Ottawa to remember her. Nadia was the victim of an internet suicide predator who convinced her, via the internet, to commit suicide.

Deborah Chevalier, Nadia's mother, walked with a group of 50 people on a path along the Rideau River, retracing the steps her daughter took before taking her life.

William Melchert-Dinkel, who allegedly counseled Nadia to commit suicide, is a nurse from St. Paul Minnesota. He is allegedly connected to other internet suicide deaths.

Melchert-Dinkel has yet to be charged by the police in Minnesota – probably because suicide counseling over the internet lacks legal precedents in the law.

In 2005, the government of Australia amended their suicide act to specifically outlaw suicide counseling, via the internet or other communications devices. The government in the UK has reacted to the problem of internet suicide counseling and promotion via the internet by updating their suicide act to specifically define it as a crime.

Chevalier told Metronews.ca that the walk had two purposes — to remember Nadia and to push for stricter laws

regarding Internet predators.

“We all know she suffered from depression,” she stated, “but she lived a wonderful life.”

“He’s (Melchert-Dinkel) is not the only one out there. How many more must die before we take this seriously?”

Chevalier told the Canadian Press that the walk had a second purpose.

“Basically this is a search for justice,” she said. “We need to demand law enforcement do something about internet predators.”

Harold Albrecht, the Member of Parliament from Kitchener-Conestoga became concerned about the issue of internet suicide predators when he first learned about the case of Nadia Kajouji in the national media.

Albrecht has received a legal analysis and is planning to introduce a bill in parliament to ensure that if any future cases occur, that legal authorities will be able to convict the suicide predator.

Action Item: A petition is enclosed with this newsletter. Circulate it and get as many people to sign as you can, and return it to Harold Albrecht as soon as possible.

Second International Symposium on Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide

“NEVER AGAIN”

An important opportunity to stop the euthanasia lobby

The goal of the Second-International Symposium is to build an effective, unified, and focused group of organizations and individuals to stop the euthanasia lobby.

May 29 - 30, 2009 at the National Conference Center, Lansdowne Virginia, near Washington DC - Dulles Airport.

Co-Sponsors:

Euthanasia Prevention Coalition, International Task Force on Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide, Compassionate Health Care Network, Not Dead Yet, Physicians for Compassionate Care,

Terri Schindler Schiavo Foundation, Institute for the Study of Disability and Bioethics, Vermont Alliance for Ethical Health Care, ALERT, Care Not Killing Alliance, No Less Human, and the Family Center - (Zagreb, Croatia).

Speakers

Rita Marker, Wesley Smith, Diane Coleman, Stephen Drake, Dr. William Toffler, Dr. Mark Mostert, Margaret Dore, Randy Richardson, Bobby Schindler, Eileen Geller, Alison Davis, Dr. Peter Saunders, Alex Schadenberg, Dr. Margaret Cottle, Lionel Rosemont, & Colin Harte

The cost is \$199 regular, or \$139 for

a student or a person with a disability. The room rate at the National Conference Center is \$139 regular room, (plus all taxes).

The registration and room rate includes the cost for all meals and refreshment breaks on May 29 - 30.

Register online at www.epcc.ca or www.euthanasiaprevention.on.ca – go to the conference registration section. Special flight discounts available with United Airlines –

Quote our Meeting ID Code: 585JQ.

Be part of the most important gathering ever - to stop the euthanasia lobby in America and worldwide.

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Legalization of assisted suicide would have dangerous consequences

By Dr Calum MacKellar

(Reprinted with permission from www.theherald.co.uk/-
April 20, 2009)

The proposal to legalize assisted suicide, being presented by Margo MacDonald, the independent MSP, would have far-reaching consequences on the manner in which suicide, of any kind, would begin to be perceived in Scotland.

Until now, the attempted suicide of an individual, such as a young person, is never seen as something to be encouraged in society. Instead, a lot of concern is usually raised as to the individual's state of mind and the fact that he or she may need psychological assistance, support, and counseling. In other words, it would be ethically very wrong to help someone commit suicide in these circumstances.

In Scotland, there are, on average, two suicides every day and the suicide rate is generally higher than in other parts of the UK. Because of this, the Scottish Government launched the Choose Life program in 2002, which is a 10-year strategy and action plan to try to prevent and reduce the high rate of suicide.

On the Choose Life website, it is indicated that, in Scotland, suicide is one of the main causes of death among young people. It also emphasizes that every life lost to suicide is a tragedy - whatever the person's age - representing a lost life, a lost mother or father, brother, sister, son or daughter, and a wound that does not easily heal in those who are left behind.

Moreover, most people who attempt suicide do not want to

die; they want to end the pain they are suffering. In the light of this, if assisted suicide were ever decriminalized in Scotland, even though physical suffering can be adequately addressed through palliative care, a very real danger would exist that the suicide of individuals, such as healthy young persons, would also begin to be considered as acceptable to society. And this would happen at the very time the government is trying to reduce the very high suicide rates in Scotland.

Indeed, there is a very real risk that the legalization of assisted suicide would completely undermine any attempt in Scotland to reduce the number of suicides that may become an acceptable exit in the face of depression or hardships.

Moreover, we should remember that as soon as a second person is consciously involved in a suicide, and that this is accepted by society, then it is society as a whole that consents to this act. This would give rise to very dangerous consequences concerning the manner in which the whole of

society would consider the value, meaning, and worth of a human life.

Encouraging any person to commit suicide is highly irresponsible and unacceptable. Because of this, assisting any person to commit suicide would put extremely vulnerable persons at risk and should not be possible in Scotland.

Dr Calum MacKellar is Director of Research, Scottish Council on Human Bioethics, Edinburgh.

... every life lost to suicide is a tragedy - whatever the person's age - representing a lost life, a lost mother or father, brother, sister, son or daughter, and a wound that does not easily heal in those who are left behind.

By Alex Schadenberg

When considering our response to the pressure that has been exerted by the euthanasia lobby to legalize assisted suicide, it is important to consider the response by people in other jurisdictions.

In the UK, there have been several attempts in the past few years to legalize assisted suicide. The UK is known for its excellence in palliative care, yet it is a modern liberal democratic nation.

Recently the government in the UK proposed to amend the statutes on assisted suicide to ensure that legal authorities had the ability to stop the recent phenomenon of internet suicide predators. There has been a rash of suicides in the UK that have been connected to predators who

A tale of two countries

join suicide chat-groups with the hope of convincing someone to commit suicide on front of their web-cam.

In 2005, the Australian government updated their assisted suicide law to outlaw suicide counseling via the internet or by other communication devices.

The right to die lobby in the UK tried to jump upon the government bill to update the suicide act by amending the bill to approve assisted suicide tourism. Fortunately, the Care Not Killing Alli-

ance in the UK effectively lobbied the government and prevented the hijacking of the bill.

Therefore, the UK is strengthening measures against assisted suicide rather than legalizing assisted suicide.

In the Czech Republic, there have also been attempts to legalize euthanasia in their country. The previous legislative attempt that failed would have legalized euthanasia.

The new bill in the Czech Republic is designed to legalize assisted suicide and not euthanasia. Those on both sides of the issue have criticized this bill because it is attempting to legalize assisted suicide, but limit it to the terminally ill.

The Czech government is unlikely to legalize euthanasia or assisted suicide anytime soon.

"The UK government is, commendably, trying to protect vulnerable people by tightening up the Suicide Act to outlaw internet suicide counseling. And yet here we have the euthanasia lobby trying, at the same time and in the same bill, to encourage suicide. ... That would be farcical as well as tragic."

(Statement by The Care Not Killing Alliance)

The Final Exit Network's death manual



Comment by Stephen Drake -

Stephen Drake, research analyst with Not Dead Yet, is well-versed in the history and politics of the euthanasia movement, infanticide, euthanasia practices across the world, and the issues surrounding nonvoluntary withholding of lifesaving treatment. He has been a frequent contributor to national newsletters on developmental disabilities. Due to his prolonged efforts in disability advocacy, he is a nationally acknowledged expert in analyzing media coverage of "right to die" and disability issues, especially where they intersect. Drake has published widely inside and outside of the disability community.

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Many people with disabilities have a deep-seated loathing of the word "special." It's a term of dismissal, patronization, and discrimination. And that's just a starting list. Unfortunately until "special education" and "special Olympics" get called by other names, we don't stand much chance of shaking the term off for any length of time with any large group of people.

It turns out there is a group, though, that has embraced its inner specialness.

Early this morning (April 22), the Associated Press issued its newest article on the Final Exit Network. I've been waiting for this one to hit, since I've known for several weeks that it was coming, since I was interviewed by reporter Amanda Lee Myers.

General comments: This is the best example of real journalism that I've seen since this story broke. Myers went to all sources on this. The Final Exit Network (FEN) members get their say. I'm in there too.

But the most powerful "voice" in the article is the FEN's own training manual. The Associated Press obtained the police report on the FEN that contained the contents of the training manual for persons who are known as exit guides.

From the article published by MSNBC:

PHOENIX - A training manual for an assisted-suicide group tells "exit guides" that they are special people and should celebrate their role in guiding others to their deaths.

The lengthy document, referred to by police in the

U.S. city of Phoenix as a training manual for the Final Exit Network, offers exit guides step-by-step instructions on how to show others how to kill themselves by breathing in helium. Guides also are told how to dispose of the equipment used in the death and position the bodies so they look like they died of natural causes.

The manual encourages the guides, telling them they are compassionately guiding suffering people to their deaths during "a special time."

Special people, special times, it's all just so... special. Wait! There's more...

"You, as the first responder, are a special person," the manual says. "You all were attracted to this program because of a compassionate interest ... Sometimes that means to 'hear' a desperation that the member does not know how to communicate and softly voice it for them."

'A sense of celebration'

The manual tells guides that if they've planned carefully, they can "anticipate this special day with a sense of peace and celebration."

Considering the text of the article, my own quotes don't stand out as extreme, for a change. They're the same kind of comments I always make, but this time they're in the context of a real news story instead of a softball treatment of FEN as some kind of "human interest" story:

Stephen Drake of the Rochester, New York-based group Not Dead Yet, which is against assisted suicide, compared Final Exit Network and the wording in its training manual to a cult and said it's hard to distinguish what the group does from murder.

"What they do is reduce ambivalence," he said. "I submit that anybody whose conditions for committing suicide is that they have to have someone around them to make sure that they don't screw it up and they're not alone is ambivalent. There are lots of people who want to commit suicide and they just do it."

Just a word about my comment. When I made my remarks about murder, it was in reaction to being told that the manual did contain instructions for holding the hands of the person down after the plastic bag over the head - I don't remember the exact wording but the idea was that it was necessary to do that so that involuntary movements didn't end up tearing the bag loose. Obviously, all it takes is one single instance of stopping a purposeful attempt to tear the bag off and "assistance" becomes murder.

They want to be "special"? Personally, I'd call it something else. But please keep them away from short yellow school buses - especially short yellow school buses carrying anyone I know and care about.

NOT DEAD YET
The Resistance

Not Dead Yet – 497 State St Rochester, NY 14608-1642

Canadian Couple seeking death at suicide clinic in Switzerland

George and Betty Coumbias are planning to become the first couple fulfill a suicide pact at the Dignitas assisted suicide clinic in Switzerland, when one of the couple is not even sick.

The Coumbias's were featured in the 2007 film entitled "The Suicide Tourist" that was produced by Canadian filmmaker, John Zaritsky.

In that film we learned that George Coumbias had a heart-condition, while Betty Coumbias was active and healthy. George and Betty have a suicide pact based on the idea that they couldn't live without each other.

According to an article written by Tom Blackwell in the National Post, Ludwig Minelli, the director of Dignitas is asking the local state officials in Zurich to give doctors the authority to prescribe a lethal dose to healthy people after they have been counseled at the Dignitas clinic.

The National Post article stated that Minelli expects to be turned down at the local level, but then he intends to appeal the decision to the Court of Zurich and if necessary to the Federal Court of Switzerland.

The article also stated that Minelli stated to the Coumbias's that he has not made his request specific to their suicide pact but that the request was made by Dignitas in general.

This is not the first time Dignitas has created contro-

versy over their assisted suicide policies. Recently the authorities in Zurich denied Dignitas the right to store lethal drugs.

Last year Dignitas was under fire for using the Exit Bag to kill its patients to allow them to assist suicides without the involvement of a physician.

The National Post article stated that although Dignitas originally advocated assisted suicide as an escape for the very sick, he now argues that it should be an option for people who are "tired of living." Minelli claims to have assisted the suicide for people with bipolar disorder, schizophrenia and other mental illnesses.

Margaret Somerville the renowned ethics professor from McGill University was quoted in the National Post as saying: "People sometimes want to die after losing a spouse because of pure loneliness, but the condition is not irreversible. She recalled a doctor telling her at a conference in the Netherlands, ... about how she gave a lethal injection to an elderly woman who had repeatedly asked to die after her husband had passed away. Somerville asked the physician if anyone had suggested simply buying the lonely woman a cat."

Ruth von Fuchs, the leader of the Right to Die Society of Canada defended the couple's plans. She stated to the National Post that: "some people do not see life as an obligation or

"indentured servitude" that must be continued no matter what."



George and Betty Coumbias

**For regular updates,
the link to Alex Schadenberg's blog, and
information on the "Take the Pledge" campaign,
go to www.epcc.ca**

Battle ground States - Assisted Suicide

By Alex Schadenberg

Euthanasia Prevention Coalition

The Euthanasia Prevention Coalition has closely followed the push by the euthanasia lobby to legalize assisted suicide throughout the United States.

Since the I-1000 Initiative in Washington State legalized assisted suicide by a 58% to 42% margin, and since Judge Dorothy McCarter in Montana legalized assisted suicide by judicial fiat, the euthanasia lobby or "Compassion & Choices" is working overtime to achieve one more victory in 2009.

This must not happen!

The Euthanasia lobby has now arranged for the introduction of bills in Hawaii, New Mexico, Connecticut, New Hampshire, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts and recently in Vermont. Most of these bills have been defeated, but the bills in New Hampshire, Pennsylvania, and Massachusetts remain alive.

We must be particularly concerned about the Montana court decision. It is being appealed — excellent briefs have been written that effectively explain that there is no state right to assisted suicide.

Nonetheless, the Montana decision was made by an activist judge and we cannot be certain of the outcome.

Many successes

We should be proud of the accomplishments by many groups and individuals. These accomplishments include:

- People in Washington State who are seeking assisted suicide have currently had difficulties finding physicians willing to kill their patients.

- Most hospitals in Washington State have decided not to facilitate assisted suicide on their premises.

- Most of the legislatures have been interested in listening to the arguments against assisted suicide.

- We have successfully stopped all the legislative attempts to legalize assisted suicide.

We will win

We can and we will win the debate on assisted suicide, but it will depend on the direct and committed involvement of many more groups and individuals who are willing to follow a clear and unified strategy. Attend the Second-International Symposium and become part of the victory.

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