



'GREEN LIGHT' FOR ASSISTED SUICIDE

Assisted suicide is being introduced to Britain - despite the fact that the law on assisted suicide, which is currently illegal, is unchanged.

People who have accompanied relatives to a suicide clinic in Switzerland have not been prosecuted. Debbie Purdy, who went to the High Court and the Appeal Court seeking a guarantee that her husband would not be prosecuted if he accompanied her to a Swiss clinic, was not successful, but on appeal to the House of Lords, the law lords said the Director of Public Prosecutions must spell out when people will be prosecuted.

The DPP said prosecution was **unlikely** if the victim was sure he wanted to commit suicide and the helper, a relative or close friend, had sought to dissuade the victim, did not stand to benefit and was not a worker in a care home - **thus giving the green light to assisted suicide in these circumstances.** *continued over...*

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Critics said Parliament had not legalised assisted suicide and was not likely to, but assisted suicide was being allowed on the say-so of one man. They said opening the door to legally permitted assisted suicide will lead to increasing abuse.

It was even suggested that Lord Phillips, the senior law lord, who has publicly expressed sympathy for assisted suicide, had taken advantage of the situation effectively to allow assisted suicide without Parliament.

It was said the DPP's guidelines will be subject to consultation, but the guidelines are already operative.

The Christian Legal Centre was concerned that the guidelines will lead to "ever-widening application" with a situation where elderly and vulnerable people would perceive themselves as a burden with "a duty to die."

2 A recently conducted survey, undertaken by ComRes, discovered that people in the UK are evenly divided in regards to the legalisation of euthanasia.

"Previously we have been told that more than 80 per cent of people support legalisation, but this poll has revealed that this is simply not true." says a spokesman for Choose Life.

The DPP's guidelines suggest that prosecution will be unlikely if the party did not stand to benefit from the death, or if the suspect was a spouse, relative or close friend. It would be a difficult task to decipher the suspect's true motivation since many victims will leave wills from which relatives and loved ones will benefit.

Questioned as to whether his ruling may lead to an increase in suicides, the DPP said that "Only time will tell. It may do; it may not do."

The Christian Legal Centre warns that the publication of the guidelines "has the dangerous effect of encouraging the idea that some lives do not need to be protected under the law." Paul Tully, general secretary of SPU, stated:

"The new interim policy for prosecuting assisted suicide issued by the Director of Public Prosecutions today confirms the fears of disabled people that their lives are regarded as of inferior quality by the law."

The guidelines will apply to the medical profession, which means that doctors will now be able to help their patients commit suicide. It is highly likely that an increase in assisted suicide may be expected.

Patients 'sedated to death'

A letter in the Daily Telegraph from a number of doctors suggesting that patients having food and fluid withdrawn and being sedated, resulting in their deaths, when they were not in fact dying, caused a storm.

A Daily Mail article suggested that "patients are wrongly being assessed as close to death, then denied food and fluid and sedated with a 'chemical cosh' until they die."

The debate concerned the use of the Liverpool Care Pathway, an end-of-life care strategy developed within the hospice movement. This allows for sedation and withdrawal of food and fluid from dying patients to reduce distress to the patient during the dying process.

The LCP was also being used in 300 hospitals and 500 care homes, where it is suggested there was a tendency to rely on a "tick box" list of symptoms rather than the needs of the individual patient, and that doctors were not sufficiently trained in geriatric care to notice signs of recovery. A recent audit of the LCP suggested that the pathway is not necessarily a one-way street to death.

Dr Peter Saunders, director of Care Not Killing, proposed that the pathway is implemented under the consultation of a multi-professional team. He calls "for continuing education of health care professionals at all levels in all aspects of modern palliative care, including diagnosing correctly that patients are imminently dying and detecting reversible causes of deterioration in patients in advanced illness."

In similar vein, the BBC reported that the use of continuous deep sedation until death is twice as high in the United Kingdom than in the Netherlands, totalling 16.5% of all UK deaths, leading to criticism that continuous deep sedation is being used inappropriately. Professor Clive Seale said people should not jump to conclusions, since there exists a "very different medical culture" between the UK and Holland.

The anti-euthanasia organisation Alert have stated that it is death by dehydration, as opposed to sedation, that should be the greatest cause for concern.

Dr Peter Hargreaves, a signatory of the letter that provoked the storm, claims that "dehydration can cause the build-up of toxic metabolites from morphine and other drugs, resulting in confusion, drowsiness and jerking or twitching. This is then often managed by sedation rather than rehydration."

Whilst hydrating a patient by drip will not cause undue distress, most doctors believe it is unnecessary during the last stages of life.

Dr Phillip Harrison claims continuous deep sedation was used in the case of his father without consulting his family. Dr Harrison arrived at the hospital two hours before his father died, but discovered that the patient had been heavily sedated despite no evidence that he was in any pain. He was unable to say goodbye to his father, which he felt could have been avoided.

"I have never seen that in my medical practice before," he said. "I've seen euthanasia once, but I've never seen anybody being put to death without consent." The hospital has apologised. After complaints that patients have been sedated without relatives being consulted, a report called for relatives to be better informed.

Retired doctor Libby Wilson, a prominent figure of the pro-euthanasia organisation Friends at the End, has been questioned by Surrey police regarding her part in the suicide of a former university lecturer in June. Dr Wilson, who is 83, admits to providing suicide advice and guidance to multiple sclerosis sufferer Cari Loder, who ended her life using helium purchased on the internet. It will be interesting to see how the recently published DPP guidelines are implemented in this case, since Dr Wilson was previously unknown to the victim.

Because of the 2005 Mental Capacity Act, doctors decided not to provide any treatment after young mother Kerrie Woollorton deliberately took poison. The 26-year-old, who suffered from an untreatable personality disorder, presented a "living will" when she arrived at the hospital, which prevented doctors from saving her life. A Daily Mail article says even assisted suicide campaigner Debbie Purdy "attacked failings in the law that allowed doctors to let a mentally unstable woman kill herself."

Abortion advertising delayed

In a previous issue of *image* news readers were asked to make the Advertising Standards Agency aware that large numbers of people were firmly opposed to moves to advertise abortion on national television and radio. The number of complaints received by the **Broadcasting Committee of Advertising Practice** (BCAP) was overwhelming. As a result, a final decision for these proposals has been delayed.

Said a spokesman for BCAP: *"The volume of responses, around 4,000, to the CAP and BCAP code consultation was significant and greater than anticipated."*

Ordinarily, a consultation to liberalise advertising rules would only garner about 300 responses. Said one critic: *"A TV advertisement is very superficial and cannot do justice to a serious issue such as this."*

Whilst the delay is a positive thing, permission for such advertising is still being considered, with the intention of announcing a decision in the first quarter of 2010. Continued prayer and protest is imperative to ensure that the decision is the correct one.

Paul Tully, general secretary of the Society for the Protection of Unborn Children, says: *"We*

must ensure that the Government notes the depth of public concern on this matter. . . SPUC groups around the country are currently promoting a national petition directed to the Prime Minister to ensure that our concerns are heard."

■ **It has been revealed** that, in recent years, the Scottish health service has provided a number of abortions to girls as young as 12. Some 2871 abortions have been

performed on girls under 16 in Scotland in the last nine years.

Peter Kearney, spokesman for the Catholic Church in Scotland, suggests these shocking statistics highlight the misguided nature of Government sexual health strategies, claiming *"Until politicians and health professionals stop counting abortion as a solution and realise what an appalling problem it is, these numbers will probably get worse."*

■ **Whilst health officials seem reluctant** to acknowledge that the provision of abortions in primary care establishments may lead to an increase in demand for abortions, it has recently transpired that close to 400 abortions were performed in general practice since first licensed.

In the last year, this number of abortions has been carried out in two GP surgeries alone, with the Care Quality Commission considering applications to license further primary care surgeries. According to Richard Hoey, editor of Pulse, however, "providing abortion at a practice will never be for every GP, because of the degree of workload involved and also for some because of their personal views."

■ **A study has found that women** who have undergone abortions may be more likely to give birth to premature or low-weight babies in subsequent pregnancies. An article for the BBC shows the research, an amalgamation of

37 studies undertaken worldwide, indicates that in women who had undergone more than one abortion, there was a 72 per cent increased risk for low birth weight and 93 per cent for prematurity.

■ **In a moving article for the Daily Mail**, policewoman Miriam Virgo has detailed how God mercifully intervened in her decision to abort her unborn daughter, who was conceived in a case of date rape. The born again Christian, 27, describes how she experienced an unpredicted "rush of love" towards her child moments before the abortion was due to take place.

Whilst Miriam had never believed in abortion, the difficult circumstances of conception and apprehension that the child might be a constant reminder of the rape, ensured that she followed counsel and scheduled an abortion. However, in a *"moment of help from God"* Miriam changed her mind and went on to give birth to Kayleigh, now seven.

One commentator suggests that the case illustrates *"the basic principle of the entire pro-life cause, that an unborn child has dignity and value, no matter what the circumstances of her conception."* It is hoped that the story will inspire other women in a similar position to take courage and protect the lives of their innocent, unborn children.

■ **Michelle Stepney** faced a horrific ultimatum when she was diagnosed with cervical cancer 19 weeks into her pregnancy, when doctors offered her the choice between her life and the lives of her unborn twin girls.

The day after diagnosis, Michelle's gynaecologist proposed a radical hysterectomy that would guarantee long-term survival but would necessitate the termination of both her babies. The alternative course of action involved waiting for the twins to be born before undergoing treatment, a strategy which obviously posed risks.

Unable to reconcile herself to the prospect of losing her twins, Michelle appealed to her medical team who pooled their expertise to create a programme of treatment to contain Michelle's tumour long enough for the babies to grow to a size when it was safe to deliver them by Caesarean. At 31 weeks it was discovered that the twins had survived the course of treatment and the cancer had, in fact, shrunk.

The twins were delivered safely, although prematurely, and are described now as *"healthy, boisterous two-year-olds."* Michelle underwent the required surgery and there is now no sign of the cancer recurring. Praise the Lord for Michelle's courage and the expertise of the medical team.

■ **It has emerged that many British women of Asian origin** are travelling abroad to terminate pregnancies in order to avoid birthing girls. The practice is so widespread that UN figures place the total number of girls aborted in India each year at 750,000. This figure, saddeningly, incorporates a number of British women who travel to India to undergo the procedure. Sex selective abortion is illegal in India, yet a BBC news article shows that the cultural pressure to have boys is so great that the practice has simply been forced underground.

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Searching on the internet could also raise money if you use www.easysearch.org.uk and choose *image*

UN wants sex-ed at five

The UN has issued a draft report, titled International Guidelines on Sexual Education, which advocates teaching children as young as five about explicit sex acts, such as masturbation. The report guidelines have been described as “an evidence-informed and rights-based framework to give children and young people access to the knowledge and skills they need in their personal, social and sexual lives.”

Critics have labelled the guidelines, which are due to be distributed to governments, local authorities and education bodies on a global scale, as “wholly inappropriate.” Colin Mason, Director of Media Production at Population Research Institute, suggests that “it’s a kind of one-size-fits-all approach that’s damaging to cultures, religions and to children.”

Incredibly, the report describes abstinence programmes which place emphasis on traditional values towards marriage and sex as “faulty,” whilst proceeding to advise that young people instead learn about abortion, same-sex relationships and sexually transmitted diseases from a young age.

It seems particularly worrying that the guidelines were produced under consultation from the Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS), who evidently consider abortion a useful means of population control. It is no surprise that the UN guidelines advocate a curriculum which treats abortion as a basic human right.

“Educating children and young people to believe that access to legal abortion is a right delivers a message which suggests that abortion

is a lifestyle choice – a method of contraception as opposed to the incredibly traumatic and distressing experience it is for most young women,” says Conservative MP Nadine Dorries.

Despite public outcry, the British Government has said that sex education will become mandatory from the age of five in schools from September 2011.

■ **Figures have shown** that the increased sex education expenditure by NHS Tayside has not yielded a reduction in the number of teenage pregnancies in Dundee as anticipated. In fact, despite an almost doubled budget dedicated to educational initiatives to combat teen pregnancy in the last five years, Dundee has overtaken Lambeth, Southwark and Nottingham to become Britain’s teenage pregnancy capital.

■ **Nine out of 10 teenage girls** have had intimate relationships with boys, a countrywide survey has found. The survey, which prompted an outcry to schools and government, highlighted the prominence of peer pressure, exploitation and physical violence within these teenage relationships.

Research, carried out by the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children with a sample of over 1,300 young people, found that a third of young women aged 13 to 17 had been subject to sexual assault by their boyfriends, with those in relationships with older boys particularly likely to suffer abuse.

Diane Sutton, of the NSPCC, comments: “Boys and girls are under immense pressure to behave in certain ways and this can lead to disrespectful and violent relationships, with girls often bearing the brunt.”

■ **Nottingham’s** Teenage Pregnancy Taskforce has pioneered a scheme offering “life skills” classes to youngsters in an attempt to reduce teen pregnancy in the area. Says chairman of the taskforce, Graham Allen MP: “We want to make them see that if they have a baby it could have a serious impact on their future prospects and that it is better to wait until they’re older to start a family.” Nottingham, a city notorious for its high rates of teenage pregnancy, has seen positive changes since the taskforce was first formed, with the number of teenage pregnancies falling five quarters in succession.

■ **Boots pharmacies**, it has been announced, have launched a new service to provide the vaccination against the human papillomavirus (HPV) in stores across the country. The consultation includes sexual health advice.

■ **A team of researchers** has discovered a correlation between exposure to sexual content on television and teenage pregnancy. The study found that it was twice as likely for young people who were exposed to high levels of sexual content on television to fall pregnant in the subsequent three years, when contrasted with those with low viewing levels.

The team of researchers concludes that “limiting adolescent exposure to sexual content on television and balancing portrayals of sex in the media with information about possible negative consequences might reduce the risk of teen pregnancy.”

■ **A number of MPs** have criticised calls to reduce the legal age of consent for sex. A BBC Radio 4 programme *Iconoclasts* provided law professor John Spencer with a platform to argue that the current age of consent, fixed at 16, should be lowered despite the fact that teenage pregnancy rates in Britain are still soaring. Parallel to this debate, some senior police officers have called for the age of consent to be reduced to 13.

It has fallen to a number of MPs to draw attention to the “ludicrous” nature of such calls. Conservative MP Ann Widdecombe, who “doesn’t detect a great deal of public support” for reductions, said: “The proposition that the age of consent should be lowered is absolutely appalling. The situation is bad enough at the moment with high rates of teenage pregnancies and sexual diseases.”

Figures show that 41.9 girls per 1,000 aged 15 to 17 became pregnant in 2007, compared with 40.9 in 2006. Many organisations, such as the Christian Institute, suggest that reducing the legal age of consent would only serve to exacerbate the dire situation in contemporary Britain.

■ **Dr Calum MacKellar**, director of research at the Scottish Council on Human Bioethics, points out a lack of consent for the use of donated cells in stem cell research. Many Scottish individuals have donated cells to the UK Biobank without being fully aware of their intended use. He says that, under new legislation implemented at the beginning of October, these cells may be used to create animal-human embryos. He suggests many donors would be “aghast” to discover that their cells were being used for this purpose.

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PRAYER AND ACTION NEEDED

This issue of *image* news illustrates the multitude of issues which plague modern Britain today. It is crucial that we continue to place these problems in God's hands through prayer.

Whilst uncertain times such as these make it somewhat easy to forget the blessing of answered prayer, we wish to exalt God for His continued intervention.

We **particularly rejoice** in the delay of plans to advertise abortion on national television and radio. **Please, however, continue to pray** that the Advertising Standards Agency would see the perverse nature of such proposals.

We wish to **thank God** for politicians who are not afraid to highlight the misguided nature of many Government strategies in regards to assisted suicide, abortion and teenage sexuality.

Please pray for our young people, who face pressure to be sexually active, are subject to violence in relationships and are bombarded with conflicting messages on a daily basis.

Pray for medical staff who face challenging times ahead. Baroness Williams of Crosby cites a letter from a distinguished nurse, in which she claims that "*she has been forbidden by consultants from sustaining*

life on the part of patients who have not asked to die." **Please pray** that the terms of the Mental Capacity Act do not lead to a "*slippery slope*" with regards to euthanasia.

Please pray that parliamentarians would refuse to allow any further unjudicial adjustments to laws regarding assisted suicide.

If you would like to oppose proposed legalisation of assisted suicide, a petition to 10 Downing Street can be found at: <http://petitions.number10.gov.uk/notolegalsuicide>

It declares "*We the undersigned petition the Prime Minister to retain the law that makes it a criminal offence to assist another person to commit suicide*" (Deadline: July 29, 2010).

Thank God for all who prayed on the National Day of Prayer about abortion in October.

Please pray for an excellent intake on *image's* training course in pregnancy counselling skills in London and Manchester in the New Year.

Please continue to remember all those working with *image*.

There are constantly new opportunities to expand *image's* ministry. **Pray for** wisdom for leadership and the workers to make it possible.

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