

Update on euthanasia and assisted suicide in Canada



Dr. Paul Saba is a family physician who practices in Montreal, Canada and is President of the Coalition of Physicians for Social Justice. Dr. Saba who has worked both in the United States and Canada warns the the Public Health Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly: «Euthanasia and assisted suicide is dangerous and causes needless loss of lives in Canada and around the world. People with many quality years to live throw away their lives. In Canada there is abuse with hundreds of patients dying each year who do not meet the guidelines. Assisted suicide promotes dying rather than living. »



Predictions of living less than 6 months are wrong in 50% of cases for severe heart or lung conditions. More than ten years ago Mona was wrongly told she had a few months to live with a chronic lung condition. Mona could have been a candidate for assisted suicide. Today with better medical treatment she is happy to be alive and enjoys her grandchildren. globalnews.ca/news/2815494/opponents-of-assisted-dying-law-ready-for-court-challenge/



There are lethal errors in medical diagnosis. In 2004, Alexandre Montreuil underwent lung-removal surgery for a misdiagnosed lung cancer which was a fungal infection cured with medicines. When wrongly informed that he had lung cancer, Alexandre considered suicide and would have undergone euthanasia if it had been available in 2004.

Dr. Saba warns: “People who are not well are often depressed and can be easily persuaded to prematurely end their lives. In Canada, the euthanasia laws do not protect patients from ending their lives prematurely because of feelings of hopelessness, lack of a future, being overwhelmed, and the lack of access to timely and adequate medical care services. Thus the process of free and informed consent is not being respected.”

In the province of Quebec, Canada, the government reports a significant increase in the number of euthanasia deaths over the past 3 years with a total of 1664 euthanasia deaths: 5% of the deaths did not conform to the law and another 5% of reported deaths missed important information. In some cases people without a “serious and incurable illness” have been euthanized. (Quebec: Commission sur les soins de fin de vie). 2704 euthanasia and assisted suicide deaths were performed in all of Canada in 2017. (Canada: 2nd and 3rd Interim Reports on Medical Assistance in Dying).

Euthanasia and assisted suicide is illegal in the vast majority of civilized countries around the world whose laws protect the lives of its citizens with conditions that could make them candidates for euthanasia and assisted suicide. Only 6 countries of the world allow euthanasia or assisted suicide representing less than 2% of the world’s population.

The World Medical Association, which comprises 112 countries worldwide, has consistently rejected euthanasia describing this practice as unethical.

Dr. Saba reminds the Public Health Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly that overly pessimistic doctors are less likely to admit patients with severe asthma to an intensive care unit. These unadmitted patients are more likely to die (*British Medical Journal* 2007; 335:1132). “Won’t overly pessimistic and “burned out” doctors (15% of physicians are depressed) persuade people to die by assisted suicide rather than finding better treatments to live?” queried Dr. Saba.

Dr. Saba warns legislatures not to follow Canada’s mistake and urges them to vote against assisted suicide and euthanasia (H.B. No. 5898). *For more information: Dr. Paul Saba M.D. 514-886-3447 pauljsaba@gmail.com*