

Tuesday, May 10th, 2016

## EXPERTS UNDERSCORE ROLE FOR PALLIATIVE CARE AS SAFEGUARD FOR VULNERABLE PERSONS

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Experts presenting testimony to the [Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights](#) and the [Senate Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs](#) have underscored the importance of identifying all physical, psychosocial, existential and spiritual sources of distress which might underlie a patient's request to die. On Thursday, Dr. Harvey Max Chochinov, Canada Research Chair in Palliative Care and VPS Advisor, emphasized that ***"ALL patients whose deaths are reasonably foreseeable and are experiencing intolerable suffering should have, at a minimum, the benefit of a palliative care consultation"***.

The purpose of a palliative care consultation would be twofold, experts in the field agree. First, it would ensure that patients' experience is one of careful attention not only to physical symptoms, but to the full human condition at end-of-life. In the course of a palliative consultation, patients would be fully informed of all options that could be initiated on their behalf to ease suffering, whatever its source. In addition, involving the expertise of palliative care physicians would advance our understanding of the personal and social dynamics of hastened death, by focusing broadly upon physical, psychological and other forms of human suffering.

Other supporters of the Vulnerable Persons Standard have called for amendments to Bill C-14 that recognize the unique capacity of palliative medicine to address patient suffering. Today at the Senate Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs, Dr. Michael Bach, Executive Vice-President of the Canadian Association for Community Living and VPS Advisor, proposed an amendment that would require "a palliative care

consultation outlining the full range of treatment, technology and support options that might alleviate suffering and any vulnerability to inducement to commit suicide" as an essential prerequisite to enable any person to make an informed decision about medically assisted death.

Full copies of CACL's and other Committee submissions can be found [on the VPS-NPV website under 'Materials Related to Bill C-14'](#).

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### IN THE NEWS:

- [Doctor-assisted death bill falls well within top court's ruling](#), Policy Options Magazine commentary by Dianne Pothier
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### DID YOU KNOW?

The VPS [website page](#) featuring news and resources on Bill C-14 now includes copies of briefs that will be of interest to VPS supporters and have been submitted to the [Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights](#) and the [Senate Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs](#). Several VPS Advisors have been invited to make presentations before these committees; many of these will be featured in upcoming VPS e-newsletters.

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*"The right to palliative care must be as robust as the right to hastened death. A National Secretariat for Palliative Careen would coordinate and oversee future non-legislative measures. This will ensure that patients do not choose hastened death due to lack of access to high quality palliative care services."*

Dr. Susan MacDonald, Medical Director, Palliative Care, Eastern Health, and  
President of the Canadian Society of Palliative Care Physicians

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The Vulnerable Persons Standard was developed by a group of more than forty advisors with expertise in medicine, ethics, law, public policy and needs of vulnerable persons. The Standard is a series of evidence-based safeguards intended to help ensure that Canadians requesting assistance from physicians

to end their life can do so without jeopardizing the lives of vulnerable persons who may be subject to coercion and abuse.

To learn more about the Standard and the many Canadians and organizations endorsing the Standard, please visit us at [www.vps-npv.ca](http://www.vps-npv.ca).

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Stay up to date with the Vulnerable Persons Standard:

