

From Cyprus

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Euthanasia meant in ancient Greek 'good, painless and happy death'. The Hippocratic oath (circa 400 BC) says 'I will prescribe regimen for the good of my patients according to my ability and my judgment and never do harm to anyone. To please no one will I prescribe a deadly drug, nor give advice which may cause his death'.

In modern medicine euthanasia is the instigation of a painless death or its acceleration in order to relieve the suffering of a dying person. The British philosopher Bacon established this term in the thirteenth century.

There is no doubt that global social issues influence also the public in Cyprus. If we are not yet faced with the problem of euthanasia, it is because there is still here the often overprotective role of the family. Another reason that does not allow discussion of euthanasia is the role of the Greek Orthodox Church. The Church is consistently against not only euthanasia but also suicide. Life is always seen as being in the hands of God. Only God who gave life can take it.

We agree with the key issues in paragraph 4, especially paragraphs 4.4 and 4.5. From our experience and that

from the literature, patients who have good palliative care request less often euthanasia. Paragraph 4.10 is the most important issue. Unfortunately in Cyprus no significant funding has been given to palliative care in the health budget, as it is not a recognized speciality. It is only the substantial contribution of the two cancer charities that have developed the awareness of the need for palliative care in Cyprus to comply with WHO recommendations and European standards of care. It is also with a lot of work that palliative care in Cyprus is beginning slowly to be recognized by many of the doctors and the healthcare professionals. We are more often being consulted about symptom control, especially pain, and we hope that in the near future our home care service will expand to reach the whole of Cyprus (Greeks and Turks).

The EAPC should be congratulated for stimulating a discussion on euthanasia. The paper is helpful, clear and accurate. It clarified for us a number of very important issues about euthanasia and will help our day-to-day practice.