

January 21, 2024

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing you as a physician with 32 years of experience in family practice. I am a rare physician today who loves their job and find great satisfaction in what I do.

One of the toughest parts of being a doctor is delivering bad news. In a rural community, I know my patients and their families. Imagine how that would change if I started offering to help someone in the family commit suicide because of a tough diagnosis.

Now, instead of being the one who will stand by them and offer everything I have to help them through a rough time, I will be offering a way to end their lives. How will that affect the care I am going to provide to the rest of the family? What will that do to the patient-doctor relationship if someone thinks that I am pushing an end to life when another member faces a similar situation? What if I am the doctor in the emergency room and the patient dies unexpectedly? Will people assume that I don't care about whether my patients live or die? Or that I am making that decision for them?

Sometimes, a person is suffering or knows that they will be suffering due to an illness. This is hard on them and the family members and loved ones who feel helpless while watching. It can sound like a humane solution to pick a day to die rather than allow suffering to continue.

Suffering will always be part of life. A patient of mine suffered tremendously when her sister decided to use Physician Assisted Suicide in another state. It divided the family on whether this was ethical or not. In the end, her sister made the decision to move ahead with this. However, while she was ill, she became very weak. Her arms were strong enough to pick up and take the first pill. But, when she waited the prescribed amount of time before taking the second medication, she could not lift the cup or get it to her mouth, so she asked her family to do this for her. Now, her family will struggle with the memory of assisting her in suicide. It wasn't planned to go that way, but they must live with the process of what transpired.

Please do not put patients and families in these horrible situations. This will erode the relationships between medical providers and people who trust them with their lives.

I am praying for all of you as our public servants to make the right decisions.

Sincerely,
Frani Knowles, MD