

## LEGAL CHALLENGES

MDMD was the first right-to-die organisation to support the legal challenge being brought by Omid for the right to be assisted to die in order to end his incurable suffering due to Multiple Systems Atrophy. We have been joined in our support by Friends at the End and the British Humanist Association. Omid is being represented by the same strong legal team that represented Debbie Purdy and Tony Nicklinson. MDMD supports this case, in preference to the other legal case being brought by Noel Conway, as Omid's case has a broader scope. Noel Conway's case is restricted to people with a life expectancy of 6 months or less. In the Nicklinson case Lord Neuburger, President of the Supreme Court, said "*There seems to me to be significantly more justification in assisting people to die if they have the prospect of living for many years a life that they regarded as valueless, miserable and often painful, than if they have only a few months left to live*". MDMD wholeheartedly agrees. Omid needs to raise significant funds for his case. Please join us in making a donation at [www.crowdjustice.com/case/dignified-death/](http://www.crowdjustice.com/case/dignified-death/) His fund currently stands at £16,000 but his current goal is £60,000. **Please help him!** For more information see: [www.mydeath-mydecision.org.uk/new-legal-challenge-assisted-dying/](http://www.mydeath-mydecision.org.uk/new-legal-challenge-assisted-dying/)

## MDMD/FATE MEETING AND MDMD AGM MAY 6TH

Dr Els van Wijngaarden gave a thought-provoking lecture titled "*Ready to give up on life: The lived experience of older people who consider their lives to be completed and no longer worth living*". She described her research in the Netherlands, trying to understand the viewpoint and experiences of elderly people who want to end their lives, but cannot be helped under Dutch law. Her slides, the audio recording, and a description of her talk are available here: [www.mydeath-mydecision.org.uk/info/lectures/2017-annual-lecture/](http://www.mydeath-mydecision.org.uk/info/lectures/2017-annual-lecture/)

## WEBSITE AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Our website [www.mydeath-mydecision.org.uk](http://www.mydeath-mydecision.org.uk) has received many very complimentary comments since it went live last October. Journalists and researchers are contacting us through the site and praising its clear layout and in depth coverage of the issues. Our number of supporters has grown by 25% over the period.

We are continually extending it, with a few [latest news](#) stories each month and longer articles. An example of the latter is the slides and text of a talk given by MDMD Coordinator Phil Cheatle to the Conway Hall Ethical Society. The talk was featured on the front cover of their journal. It examines the arguments used against the 2015 Marris Bill in the House of Commons debate. See: [www.mydeath-mydecision.org.uk/info/docs/](http://www.mydeath-mydecision.org.uk/info/docs/)

Several supporters have written about the end of life stories of close relatives. These have been added to the [Personal Stories](#) section of the website.

We have recently started sharing news on social media. You can now follow us:

On Twitter: [twitter.com/MDMDmydecision](https://twitter.com/MDMDmydecision)

On Facebook: [www.facebook.com/MyDeathMyDecision/](https://www.facebook.com/MyDeathMyDecision/)

We are using these sites to share our views with a wider audience – both to attract new supporters, and for media contacts who we hope will increasingly follow us on Twitter. Please share these links and add your comments to the conversations on Facebook.

## ADVANCE DECISIONS – HAVE YOU WRITTEN YOURS?

One of MDMD's objectives is to help promote the use of Advance Decisions. There is much information on our website to support this: [www.mydeath-mydecision.org.uk/info/options/advance-decisions/](http://www.mydeath-mydecision.org.uk/info/options/advance-decisions/). The recent case of [Paul Briggs](#), a policeman in his 40's who was left in a coma following a traffic accident reminds us why this is so important for everyone. His wife had to go to court to get his life support turned off – something that would not have been necessary if he had written an appropriate Advance Decision and which must have exacerbated an already tragic situation.

Dementia (now the leading cause of death in England and Wales), is a concern for many. The problem of wording an advance decision to cover the possible situations a dementia sufferer might find themselves in is discussed in a recent article by Emeritus Professor of Law, Norman L. Cantor. Prof. Cantor shares his own Advance Decision which, although written with the law in the United States in mind, provides much that can be applied elsewhere. [www.mydeath-mydecision.org.uk/avoiding-prolonged-dementia/](http://www.mydeath-mydecision.org.uk/avoiding-prolonged-dementia/)

Please help us by encouraging others to document their end of life wishes using an Advance Decision to Refuse Treatment, together with an Advance Statement describing what treatment they would like and why they hold the views they do. Although the Advance Statement is not legally binding, medical and care professionals are likely to take it into account in deciding how you should be treated. It provides a record of your views which may be helpful even if you have not lost mental capacity, but are considered “vulnerable”, relating to a decision to refuse treatment for example.

## PUBLICITY FOR MDMD

In January Penny Hall (now MDMD secretary), and Colin Brewer (MDMD Associate Coordinator) were interviewed for an article in the Mail on Sunday about how Penny accompanied her father, who suffered from dementia, to Dignitas where he ended his life. Following the article Penny gave a moving account of her experience in an interview with Radio 5 Live.

[www.mydeath-mydecision.org.uk/dementia-sufferers-ending-lives-switzerland/](http://www.mydeath-mydecision.org.uk/dementia-sufferers-ending-lives-switzerland/)

Articles like this are helping to raise awareness of the difficulties of those suffering from dementia and the need for a broad assisted dying law which gives them the option of an assisted death while they still have the mental capacity to make a life-ending decision, if that is their informed, persistent and well considered choice.

## BOOK PUBLISHED ON RATIONAL SUICIDE IN THE ELDERLY

MDMD were interested to read a recently published academic book devoted entirely to this topic. (MDMD's previous name was SOARS - the Society for Old Age Rational Suicide.) The book makes a number of references to SOARS and its website.

The book is expensive and directed particularly to psychiatrists practising in the USA, however there is much of interest in the book, despite some obvious faults. A detailed review is available here: [www.mydeath-mydecision.org.uk/book-review-rational-suicide-elderly/](http://www.mydeath-mydecision.org.uk/book-review-rational-suicide-elderly/)

The collection of papers in the book offer a range of perspectives, but the final chapter, much of which carefully unpicks and rejects a lot of the standard justifications for “rational suicide”, ends saying *“It seems to me obvious that it is sometimes better – kinder, more decent, dignified, compassionate – to bring an end to human suffering than to let it continue.”*

The fact that this book exists at all is to some extent a demonstration of the influence of our campaign. The issue of rational suicide for people with intolerable quality of life, due to incurable medical conditions, is now firmly placed on the psychiatrist's couch.

## KEEPING US IN THE NEWS – DO YOU HAVE A STORY TO SHARE?

In talking to journalists, we are frequently asked for real-life stories. These are incredibly valuable in drawing attention to the general issues. If you are prepared to share your story, or one concerning a relative or friend, please tell us. Perhaps you feel your life is complete and are at the early stages of considering an assisted death abroad – or you know someone who was denied the "good" assisted death they wished for. A continual stream of real-life stories, highlighting the problems with the current law, is essential for our campaign to keep the issues in the public eye. Stories that highlight the unfairness of limiting assisted dying only to those who have a prognosis of 6 months or less are of particular interest.

## NEXT LONDON MEETING – VENUE CHANGE AND REGISTRATION!

The next FATE/MDMD meeting will be held at 2pm on **Saturday 14th October 2017**. Dr Erika Preisig, President of Lifecircle in Basle, will give a talk titled "*Ceremonies of our life, let death be a wonderful ceremony too, guidance to a good death in self determination*". Dr Preisig is the Swiss doctor who helped Simon Binner in the BBC2 documentary "*How to Die: Simon's Choice*", shown in February 2016.

Our London meetings are getting increasingly popular, especially as our supporter numbers are growing rapidly. We have therefore decided to move to a larger venue: George Fox Room at Friends' House, 173-177 Euston Road, London NW1 2BJ.

Starting with this meeting, we will be requiring **pre-registration** using Eventbrite to guarantee a place. Some places are still likely to be available to those who haven't booked, but in the event that the room's capacity is reached, preference will be given to those who have pre-registered and arrive by 1:55. Further details are in the covering letter.

## QUOTES

*"you get the people who say 'why don't you just get on with it and kill yourself here?'. But what if you overdose and survive and you still have your illness, but now your kidneys don't work? In Switzerland they want to protect people from making these messy suicide attempts. Jumping in front of a train, jumping off a building, drowning yourself."*

**Colin Campbell**, MS sufferer who plans to end his life at Lifecircle in Basle on 15<sup>th</sup> June 2017 speaking in an interview with the Sunday Herald, 23rd April 2017

[files.heraldscotland.com/news/15240285.My\\_journey\\_to\\_Dignitas/](http://files.heraldscotland.com/news/15240285.My_journey_to_Dignitas/)

*"For all its claims, medical science cannot deal with many cases of intractable pain and suffering, and least of all the indignity that often accompanies them. The example of Canada and other countries shows that laws can be made that protect the most vulnerable and therefore halt the unnecessary prolongation of life which, for some, is not worth the candle.."*

**Ex Archbishop of Canterbury, Lord Carey of Clifton**, House of Lords debate 6<sup>th</sup> March 2017

**You can contact us by email to [mail@mydeath-mydecision.org.uk](mailto:mail@mydeath-mydecision.org.uk)**