

### **UK ASSISTED DYING COALITION (ADC) LAUNCHED**

In February we formally launched the ADC - a coalition of UK and crown dependencies organisations campaigning for a change in the law on assisted dying for the terminally ill and incurably suffering. In addition to MDMD, the founding members are Friends at the End, Humanists UK, Humanist Society of Scotland and End of Life Choices Jersey. The coalition meets regularly, enabling the member organisations to coordinate our campaigning activities and share information and advice. <https://www.mydeath-mydecision.org.uk/assisted-dying-coalition-launches/>

### **MDMD's NEW OPINION POLL – 88% OF PEOPLE AGREE WITH US!**

The results of an opinion poll we commissioned, surprised us. 93% of people think assisted dying is acceptable in at least some situations. Our research was reported in the Guardian and has been quoted elsewhere, gaining valuable publicity. NatCen, who carried out the work, asked 2,700 people how acceptable it was for a doctor to assist someone to die when they have an incurable medical condition that reduces their quality of life below the level they can accept. The question was asked in 4 variants: Terminally ill without time limit; Terminally ill with life expectancy of 6 months or less; Not terminally ill; and suffering from Alzheimer's disease but *before* mental capacity is lost. Respondents could answer "Always acceptable"; "Sometimes acceptable"; "Rarely acceptable" or "Never acceptable". All the situations had broad support, with at least 88% in favour, even if only rarely. "Terminally ill without time limit" had the most support with 93%.

MDMD are delighted by these results as they show very strong support for our policy objective, which covers all the 4 situations in the survey. Full details on our website: <https://www.mydeath-mydecision.org.uk/93-think-that-assisted-dying-is-acceptable-in-at-least-some-situations/>

### **MDMD SUPPORTERS WITH A DISABILITY – WE NEED YOUR HELP!**

Within our supporters' membership are some who are classed as disabled under the Equality Act 2010. We highly respect your place in society and your collective huge contribution to it. We believe that disabled people should have equal rights about end of life choices and that any proposed assisted dying legislation should recognise that some may not be physically able to cope with methods which have been adopted by other places such as Oregon and California.

MDMD would like to engage with disabled members and supporters to learn more about your views on assisted dying. We hope to set up a means of you sharing your thoughts and worries with others via the internet, possibly through a closed facebook group. Also, for those who don't use the internet, perhaps arranging a get together prior to a London meeting or setting up more regional groups.

Please contact MDMD's campaign director for disability issues, Ruth Eyre-Pugh, by email ([research@mydeath-mydecision.org.uk](mailto:research@mydeath-mydecision.org.uk)) or by post to our registered office: FAO Ruth Eyre-Pugh, MDMD Ltd, Unit A, 39 Moreland Street, London, EC1V 8BB.

There are many networks of disabled people who are opposed to euthanasia and assisted dying, so we would like to establish our very own network of disabled supporters who would like assisted dying to become legal in the UK. We believe in equality for all.

## MDMD FORMS ITS OWN MEDICAL GROUP, MD.MG

Director of Medical Campaigning, Colin Brewer, brought together some highly respected medics to launch our medical group in an opinion piece published by the BMJ. MDMD's medical group is open to doctors and other healthcare professionals who work with dying people. It provides a forum for medical professionals who share MDMD's goals. The opinion of the medical profession is key to our campaign. We need to understand the practical issues and concerns relating to how assisted dying can best be carried out. We also need help from within the medical community to publicise our campaign. Please tell any medical professionals you know about this group and direct them here: <https://www.mydeath-mydecision.org.uk/medicalgroup/>

## NEW DOCUMENTARY 'ENDGAME' AVAILABLE ONLINE

After a very warm reception at many film festivals and small screenings, the hour long film has been made available online. It raises many important questions with many influential figures sharing their views. It follows the course of 3 people who seek a medically assisted death in Switzerland and includes Omid's final interview the day before he ended his life. See:

<https://www.mydeath-mydecision.org.uk/endgame-documentary-on-assisted-dying-available-online/>

## MDMD/FATE MEETING APRIL 27<sup>TH</sup>

The meeting premiered a film commissioned by MDMD: "*Faith and Assisted Dying*" in which leaders from Christian, Jewish and Muslim traditions discuss the religious questions around Assisted Dying. The participants were at the meeting for a Q&A session. The film is available for use by anyone wishing to host a discussion meeting on these issues. <https://www.mydeath-mydecision.org.uk/info/lectures/apr-2019-faith-and-assisted-dying/>

## MDMD BECOMES A COMPANY LIMITED BY GUARANTEE...

As discussed in the last newsletter, MDMD has now formally become a not-for-profit limited company. This is the appropriate status for a campaign organisation whose objective is to change the UK law. The change sets us up for future growth, but does not alter our campaign objectives. We encourage all supporters to become members of the new company using our webpage: <https://www.mydeath-mydecision.org.uk/become-a-member/>

## ... NOW HELP US GROW!

We need to build our membership both to demonstrate the support we have, and to fund our future development to achieve more. **Please help us publicise MDMD to grow our membership!**

- Tell your friends and family why you support us and encourage them to join us.
- Mention MDMD on social media. Share our web pages. Broadcast to your networks!
- Add comments to web news stories about assisted dying. Please mention MDMD.
- Write letters to papers/magazines to comment on right-to-die stories, mentioning MDMD.

## FROM OUR WEBSITE...

We've added 23 news stories to our website over the last 6 months They provide thoughtful comment on right-to-die issues, promoting a serious discussion of the underlying issues. Some of the new articles:

Praise for the Royal College of Physicians for changing their stance on Assisted Dying to neutral. <https://www.mydeath-mydecision.org.uk/doctors-vote-for-the-royal-college-of-physicians-to-adopt-a-neutral-position-on-assisted-dying/>

Analysis of the case of Sarah Ninian concerning whether a legal rule (the forfeiture rule) could prevent beneficiaries from receiving their inheritance if they had accompanied a relative to Switzerland for an assisted death, even if they were not prosecuted for assisted suicide. This is a very important consideration that has previously not received publicity. <https://www.mydeath-mydecision.org.uk/the-forfeiture-rule-and-assisted-dying-punishing-compassionate-families/>

Assisted Dying opponent, and professor of palliative care, Baroness Ilora Finlay's answer when asked how to avoid late stage dementia – research suicide methods on the internet! <https://www.mydeath-mydecision.org.uk/mdmd-coordinator-asks-baroness-finlay-how-to-avoid-late-stage-dementia/>

MDMD response to the BBC2 documentary by Louis Theroux, "Choosing Death", which investigated assisted dying in USA. We suggest 4 improvements to the US approach. <https://www.mydeath-mydecision.org.uk/assisted-dying-in-the-usa-a-good-first-step-but-room-for-improvement/>

Comment on the Radio 4 programmes commemorating 10 years since Debbie Purdy's work which resulted in the DPP guidelines on assisting suicide. <https://www.mydeath-mydecision.org.uk/the-legacy-of-debbie-purdy-radio-4-programme/>

## QUOTES

"I see assisted dying as one more tool in the service of palliative care's core mission of alleviating suffering"

**Dr Sandy Buchman**, Palliative care doctor and President-Elect Canadian Medical Association <https://www.mydeath-mydecision.org.uk/parliament-hears-from-top-canadian-doctors-on-the-experiences-of-assisted-dying-abroad/>

"The creation of the euthanasia law is one of the best things I have done in my life. I haven't lived for nothing. If you know that you, together with others, have helped ease the pointless suffering of thousands of people, then you've added your weight to the balance."

**Etienne Vermeersch**, emeritus professor of moral philosophy at the university of Ghent, Belgium who died in January age 84 by voluntary euthanasia.

"As a society we need to examine the issue of assisted dying. If three doctors sign the document and the family are on board it could work."

**Alison Steadman**, Actress, Daily Mail 10<sup>th</sup> March 2019 <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/home/you/article-6757227/Alison-Steadman-calling-national-treasure.html>

"Deciding how one wants to end one's life must be the ultimate human right. If people need help to handle it with dignity, doctors should offer them help, not condemnation."

**Simon Jenkins**, columnist, author and broadcaster, Guardian 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2019 <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/mar/22/death-human-right-assisted-dying>

"There is a total disconnect between what the religious hierarchy are saying [about assisted dying] and what religious people feel."

**Rabbi Dr Jonathan Romain**, Leader of the reformed synagogue in Maidenhead speaking in the film 'Faith and Assisted Dying' April 2019 <https://www.mydeath-mydecision.org.uk/info/lectures/apr-2019-faith-and-assisted-dying/>

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

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