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Aged Care Reform

I was absolutely amazed that the Productivity Commission failed in its report to recognize the fact that there are millions of patients confined indefinitely in nursing homes who have lost quality of life suffering from dementia, Alzheimer's, incontinence and the like, awaiting the blessing of death to release them from their despair

The majority of these patients would welcome the opportunity to make a choice for a dignified and peaceful death, I cannot understand why the government will not grant approval to those who have documented this choice in an advance care directive.

It is inhumane to leave those who have lost quality of life to linger indefinitely, we do not do this to our pet animals, personally at 85 years of age I fear degeneration much more than I fear death.

When the end is nigh it is best to avoid hospital; the health system is geared to actively treating patients not to recognise the dying.

Why didn't the Commission mention this aspect in its findings and recommendations?

Surely it is just common-sense not to spend scarce health care resources on forcing patients to continue in care if they feel they have reached the end of life's road

The rapid increase of the shameful death is being fuelled by an ageing population and a lack of foresight over how to deal with the ultimate consequences of the medical advances which keep people alive for longer.

Dying today is becoming increasingly tragic and antisocial.

Some people spend years dying, and for many of the one in four of us who currently end our days in a nursing home, those last years can be like a living death.

The way we care for our dying is a true reflection on how a society cares for its people; and it has to be said that the way we treat our dying in developed countries around the world is truly shocking.

Today, although people still expect these kinds of death, medical advances and a growing dementia epidemic mean that we experience a prolonged death.

Taking so long to die when you are so old that you become confused, unmanageable and unrecognisable to friends, makes the way we are likely to die uncertain.

For governments and policy makers the best solution to this problem has been to build nursing homes - some people describe this as the final solution.

When we interview nursing home residents through our research, they tell us that they feel they lead useless lives, are a burden to others, have no future, and suffer psychologically and physically.

The care people receive in nursing homes continues to receive major criticism, not just in the UK but around the world.

The most common concerns surround lack of attention to the cultural needs and cognitive status of the residents; their former lives are all but ignored.

The fear of abandonment expressed by so many elderly people is frequently realised in full at many of these institutions.

I believe that increasing numbers of elderly and terminally ill people will turn to suicide in order to take control and manage their own death.

There are approximately one million suicides per year worldwide, and the largest age-related grouping is for those over 80 years of age.

.This is not about the well-publicised individuals who insist on their right to die, this is about ordinary older people who do not want to face disability, pain, cognitive impairment, and loss of bodily and social autonomy and dignity that old age can bring.

When asked, respondents to a survey on why they might not want to live to 100 said that being a burden to others, losing the ability to be active and useful, losing the ability to think and reason clearly and the desire to avoid prolonged suffering, were the key reasons offered as to why finding the right timing for death was important.

Governments and individuals need to tackle the issue of how we care for the dying before it becomes a major crisis.

Whether it is introducing more liberal policies that enable people to better manage how they die, a closer examination of medical ethics, better training for nursing homes or support for people who care for elderly - something needs to happen, .

We need to tackle the subject of dying head on. Talking about dying, let alone our own death, is not a popular theme for politicians or public debate, but there is no escape from the tragedy that will befall many of us when we die.

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22/1/2011