

## **Re: Assisted dying: law and practice around the world (Assisted dying: Islamic View)**

### **Assisted dying: Islamic View**

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#### **To The Editor**

We read with interest the article “Assisted dying: law and practice around the world” by Dyer O et al. Muslims form the world's second largest religious group with a population of 1.57 billion Muslims, accounting for almost a quarter of the world population. Recent data showed that the total number of Muslims in the European Union and USA exceeds 25 million. The number of Muslim physicians in USA alone is around 50,000.<sup>1</sup> Physicians treating Muslim patients at their end-of-life are often ethically challenged when making decisions, and they seriously search for religious guidance in these matters.

Human beings are considered to be responsible stewards of their bodies, which are viewed as gifts from God. The sanctity of human life is affirmed in the Qur’an. The Qur’an says: “...One who has killed a person except in lieu of murder or mischief on earth; it would be as he slew the whole mankind and whoever saves the life of a human being, it is as if he has saved the life of all mankind ...” (Qur’an 5:32). Preservation of life is one of the five basic purposes of the Islamic law (Sharia’h). Life is given by God and cannot be taken away except by Him or with His permission.<sup>2</sup>

Islam and the Islamic law clearly prohibit euthanasia in all circumstances. However, the wishes of a patient not to have his dying prolonged artificially in the presence of hopeless prognosis are well preserved. Such

wishes may be declared in accepted standing Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) orders in certain hopeless medical conditions.<sup>3</sup>

The physician therefore, has no right to terminate any human life under his care. Thus, killing a person to ease his suffering even though it is at the request of the person will be inconsistent with Islamic law, regardless of the different names given to the procedure, such as, active voluntary euthanasia, assisted suicide, or mercy killing. The Islamic World League held in Jeddah in May 1992 declared a strong rejection against the so-called euthanasia under all circumstances. Terminally ill patients should receive the appropriate palliative medication, utilizing all measures provided, and doctors should do their best to support their patients morally and physically, irrespective of whether these measures are curative or not.

2 The Islamic Medical Association of North America (IMANA) is absolutely opposed to euthanasia and assisted suicide in terminally ill patients by healthcare providers or patients' relatives.<sup>4</sup> Besides, the Laws in Islamic and Arab Countries criminalize euthanasia. In summary and according to Islam, no one is authorized deliberately to end life, whether one's own or that of another human being. Withdrawal of food and drink to hasten death is therefore not allowed and is considered as a murder crime. <sup>5</sup> Saving life is encouraged, and reducing suffering with analgesia is however acceptable, even if, in the process, death is hastened.

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