

## Better dead than disabled? The consequences of extending access to Medical Assistance in Dying (MAiD) to disabled people

April 25, 2023

The following includes audience members' comments and questions that were answered by the panelists.

- In the UK, and I suspect worldwide, those fighting for assisted suicide legalisation often lump - that is disabled people who oppose this - in with pro-life Christian protesters. It's easier for them to dismiss us by saying we're pro-lifers (many of us are not) than it is for them to acknowledge that we are disabled people with real concerns. Do you have any experience of dealing with this?
- For any of the panelists - a simple question: is it possible for a person with a disability to autonomously choose, of their own free will, to avail themselves of medical assistance in dying? Or does the social model of disability preclude the autonomy of the individual in making choices about the end of one's life?
- How do you deal effectively with liberals who say this is all about choice and the pro-killing lobby who choose to describe our position as prompted by the religious reactionary right?
- I am a disabled woman based in the UK and I volunteer as a Campaign volunteer for Humanists UK. One of the campaigns they have - with which obviously disagree - is a campaign to pass a bill for Assisted Dying. Would any of the panelists be willing to speak with Humanists UK on this topic?
- How are we training psychologists and counsellors to work with people with Disabilities to find value in life vs. choosing MAiD. I have counselled a few people who have moved from MAiD to living. I am a therapist with a disability and am mentored by a British Disability Rights activist
- How do you think MAiD will/has create[d] barriers for deinstitutionalizing long-term care, which often houses disabled folks as well as older adults?
- It seems that gate-keeping resources herds the "difficult to think of" and the "too expensive" toward death as a logical option. When those gate keepers then find themselves on the wrong sides of these categories, I wonder how their ideas would change.
- Can you speak to the current pause in extending MAiD to people with "mental illness" and any changes that may occur, or will the feds still push it through as is?
- Have you moved towards Disability Justice?
- Do you think radically expanding MAiD to all humans, regardless of their situation (i.e. to non-disabled as well), would get around the discrimination currently embedded in these policies, or make them worse?
- More of a comment: I'm a disabled person who is also a great supporter of death positivity. I desperately want to see MDs removed from the MAiD process, as they are usually among our greatest abusers and gatekeepers, especially for disabled people with multiple marginalized identities. What I want to see is licensing of holistic dying-care specialists from outside the medical system who can work with people who are seeking MAiD to help them with their decision to end their lives, without giving even more undeserved power to MDs and the biomedical system.

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- Does this perspective change if a disabled person is in debilitating chronic pain?
- What would you need and like to see from emerging social workers in this profession?
- Besides Ableism, do you recognize the toxic effects of Disabiliphobia?
- Is the topic of killing people with disabilities really solely a disability rights question? Isn't there room for the larger question of creating a society in which it is easier for us to care for one another, especially when we are vulnerable? MAID has no place in such a society, whether people want it or not.
- The Canadian Association of MAiD Assessors is not objective in that its members are pro-MAiD to begin with. Like-minded colleagues sign off as the 2nd MD or NP often without seeing or even speaking to the applicant. As a pro-lifer whose driving principle is that every life is valuable, worthy of respect and protection, it seems to me we are not at all at odds with disabled advocacy groups.
- I live in the U.S. The discussion around cost "savings" as an argument, in my opinion, really unmask the underlying valuation of life with a disability. In my experience of advocacy with legislators on services for people with disabilities, we are constantly needing to explain that what is viewed as savings is actually just postponing cost, frequently imposing more suffering and pain along the way.