

As a child in the 80's, my parents brought us to the hospital to visit our Grandfather who was suffering from cancer. I remember watching the nurses caring for my him: keeping him comfortable with positioning and pain medication and attending to his needs in a loving and compassionate manner until he passed away peacefully. It was then that I knew that I wanted to be a nurse.

Now, as a nurse with 30 years of experience, I can tell you what it means to be a nurse with Compassion:

It means comforting a dying Veteran as he awaits his long-lost brother's arrival. And then witnessing his peaceful death knowing that he reconciled with that brother.

It means having the courage to place an IV in a dying Veteran's foot because he has run out of sites, so that he can receive his pain medication.

It means returning to work each day during the Pandemic knowing the risks of doing so and being reminded by the overhead "Code Blue" alarms that people are dying by the hour.

It means racing to a high-risk Childbirth without taking time to don the protective Covid gear because those precious seconds count to save the life of a baby.

It means wearing a mask in public early in the Pandemic because there's a chance it will protect your patients.

It means being an early adopter of the vaccine in order to protect your patients.

It means advocating for patients' mental health because we know from the Sloan Kettering Pain and Palliative Care clinic that 95% of individuals that seek Assisted Suicide will change their minds once their Depression is treated. And knowing that those that are referred for evaluation are only evaluated for their capacity to make decisions, not for depression.

It is taking a stand against Assisted Suicide so that those same vulnerable patients that you protected and cared for during the Pandemic won't be goaded to take this lethal prescription.

It is reminding people of the true meaning of Compassion, to "suffer with" rather than the hijacked term that the lobbying group "Compassion and Choices" uses so you believe that Assisted Suicide is a compassionate choice. It is not.

And, I can tell you what a compassionate nurse is not...

It is not one who will be complicit in this horrible practice as the "Medical Aid in Dying: A Guide for Patients and their Supporters" by Dr. Lonny Shavelson suggests that nurses should be.

- On page 54, a nurse could insert a rectal tube so the medication can be given rectally when one is unable to swallow comfortably.
- On page 64, it suggests that another individual, such as hospice staff (which would be a nurse) can mix the medication for the patient

- And, on page 67, it states that “those around the patient should become something of a cheerleading squad to achieve the two-minute goal of swallowing.”

The last of these is troubling because it makes complicit the nurse who is usually present in a hospice setting as well as create an environment in which the patient is encouraged to consume the mixture. That is the very coercion that proponents swear does not exist.

In summary, Assisted suicide is not Compassionate Care; it is not Nursing Care.