

## **Doctors are Human and Make Diagnostic Mistakes**

I am Dr. KerriAnn Boanca, a Hospice and Palliative Medicine Fellow at MedStar Washington Hospital Center in Washington D.C. I am opposed to SB 443, legislation to legalize assisted suicide in Maryland.

If organized medicine endorsed, normalized, and encouraged assisted suicide as healthcare, my husband, who at age 25 was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer, may not be alive today at the hands of a physician. But, in fact, he is alive and well. Doctors get it wrong all the time. We are all human.

As a hospice and palliative medicine fellow, I help patients every day to prepare to die in a comfortable and dignified manner. At times that includes the withdrawal or withholding of life sustaining therapies. But that is far different from prescribing lethal drugs which results in the deliberate termination of a human life. The creation of a new and lethal pathophysiologic process that is solely intended to make the patient dead is not ethically equivalent to allowing for the preexisting pathology to run its natural course.

Medicine cannot cure every illness. But we as physicians can always heal and together with interdisciplinary colleagues, we are able to tend to total pain with proper palliative and hospice care. The facilitation, endorsement and active participation in suicide is not a healing act. We have a duty as physicians and as the medical community at large to preserve life until its natural end and to comfort those who are dying. There is no neutrality or even support on a topic that touches medicine at its very core.

I urge Maryland legislators to reject attempts to legalize assisted suicide, making the job of physicians harder, and the life of patients precarious.

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