



# Choice and Dignity, Inc.

End-of-Life Training, Resource and Referral

P.O. Box 86886, Tucson, AZ 85754

800-811-4112 ~ [www.ChoiceAndDignity.org](http://www.ChoiceAndDignity.org)

## JANUARY 2025 Newsletter

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### In The News

#### International News:

##### ***British Lawmakers Vote to Legalize Assisted Dying in Landmark Decision*** - by [Stephen Castle](#)

Reporting from London Nov. 29, 2024

Excerpted from The New York Times

After an emotive and at times impassioned debate, Britain's lawmakers on Friday voted to allow assisted dying for terminally ill patients in England and Wales under strict conditions, opening the way to one of the most profound social changes in the country in decades.

Friday's vote was not the final say on the matter for Parliament, as it will now be scrutinized in parliamentary committees and amendments to the bill may be put forward. But it is a landmark political moment, setting the stage for a significant shift that some have likened to Britain's legalization of abortion in 1967 and the abolition of the death penalty in 1969.

The new legislation would apply to a narrow group: Applicants would have to be over 18, diagnosed with a terminal illness and have been given no more than six months to live. Two doctors and a judge would be required to give their approval, and the fatal drugs would have to be self-administered.

But Kit Malthouse, a Conservative lawmaker, argued in support of the bill, saying, "The death-bed for far too many is a place of misery, torture and degradation, a reign of blood and vomit and tears." He added, "I see no compassion and beauty in that — only profound human suffering." Proponents of assisted dying say it is a merciful way to curtail unbearable suffering in the final months of life.

Under current British law, those who help relatives or friends to end their lives face police questioning and potentially prosecution. So even terminally ill patients who decide to end their life in a country with more permissive rules, like Switzerland, must

do so alone to protect their families. That condemns some to a terrible death, some proponents of the bill argued.

Ms. Leadbeater told Parliament that her legislation addressed "one of the most significant issues of our time," and asked colleagues to help families who face "the brutal and cruel reality of the status quo."

Peter Prinsley, a Labour lawmaker and surgeon, rejected claims by opponents of the bill that its scope would later be extended to include a wider category of people. "This is not some slippery slope," he said. "We are shortening death, not life, for our patients. This is not life or death; this is death or death."

*Editor's Note: You can see an opposing opinion on Page 13 of this newsletter.*

#### **The Last Resort Fights for Legality**

*Editor's Note: Last quarter we were delighted to bring you the news of the potential for the Sarco to ease the fears and costs of a Swiss exit. Unfortunately, things have not gone smoothly.*

At around 18.00 (6 pm) on 23 September 2024, following the successful first use of Sarco, Dr. Florian Willet, President of The Last Resort was arrested & detained by Swiss Police.

Following legal advice, Florian was the only person present at the time the Sarco was used. He was expected to be interviewed and allowed to go home the same night.

Despite these best laid plans, Florian has now been held in a Swiss prison for 'pre-trial detention' for 55 days, and counting.

As readers will be aware, on 23 September 2024, following the first use of Sarco in Switzerland, Dr. Florian Willet (The Last Resort President) was detained by the authorities of the Canton of Schaffhausen for pre-trial detention.

## International News — cont'd

Despite there still being no autopsy report (some 11 weeks after the death?), Florian was suddenly and unexpectedly released from prison last Monday (2 December).

According to a media statement from the Prosecutor Peter Sticher, there is no longer a 'strong suspicion' of 'intentional homicide' (murder).



A statement by Exit about Florian's release can be read on the [Exit Website](#).

Florian has said that he is 'enormously grateful' for the many letters of support that he received from the Exit/The Last Resort community in recent weeks. He said they cheered his darkest days.

### More International News

This link will take you to the news page of the World Federation of Right to Die Societies — <https://wfrtds.org/all-news/>

## National News:

*Elections have Consequences. Although President Trump disavowed any knowledge of Project 2025 he is appointing authors of the various sections to key posts.*

### Project 2025

Project 2025 explicitly opposes euthanasia, categorizing it alongside abortion as practices that are not considered healthcare. The initiative states: "From the moment of conception, every human being possesses inherent dignity and worth... The Secretary must ensure that all HHS programs and activities are rooted in a deep

respect for innocent human life from day one until natural death: Abortion and euthanasia are not health care."

This stance reflects Project 2025's broader pro-life agenda, which aims to reshape healthcare policies and practices to align with conservative values that prioritize what they define as the sanctity of human life from conception to natural death.

### A Legislative Summary and Forecast from our friends at Compassion & Choices

The recent election results could have a profound impact on medical-aid-in-dying and end-of-life care. At Compassion & Choices and Compassion & Choices Action Network, our advocacy team of policy analysts, campaign directors, organizers, lobbyists, and media pros on Capitol Hill and on the ground in our key campaign states, are working tirelessly to evaluate these developments and chart the course forward for both federal efforts and state legislative campaigns to authorize and defend medical aid in dying.

We invite you to watch this exclusive [supporter video](#), where our experts:

- Highlight key victories and setbacks for medical aid in dying across the country, including:
  - A new supportive governor in Delaware.
  - The first ever state constitutional ban of MAID in West Virginia.
  - A big win for a prescribing doctor in Oregon in the U.S. Congress.
- Break down election results and their implications for federal policies – like amending the Assisted Suicide Funding Act to allow for medical aid in dying, protecting the law in Washington, D.C. and what Project 2025 might mean for end-of-life care.
- A state-by-state evaluation of the status of legislatures and governors in our key campaign states: including Massachusetts, New Jersey, Delaware, Connecticut, Illinois, Nevada, Minnesota, Montana and more.

## Local News:

Our most recent **Exit Café** was hosted Saturday, December 7th by our Board Member, Jeannie Fransen. We had around 20 people attend. Jim's Banana Bread recipe is available by request.

Watch your email and our MeetUp website for our



March 2025 Exit Café event. We plan to host one each quarter.

## Local News — cont'd

### How to Get the Death You Want Classroom Series

We will be running the series again in the Spring. We will let you know the dates ASAP.

Feedback from our most recent classroom series was terrific. We had about 30 people in attendance. Here's a typical participant comment:

What a helpful and informative class! I wish everyone could take this class before they wrote their advance directives. When it comes to changing the conversation about death in America, this class is an inspiration.

### How to Write Your Own Obituary

Jim hosted a two-session class at the OLLI Central facility last month. It was a pilot session but turned out to be surprisingly meaningful as well as fun.

### Book Club

Inaugural Event – Board V.P. Tracy Corbin led our first on-line discussion group.

Tracy's premier selection for the Book Club was: *In Love: A Memoir of Love and Loss* by Amy Bloom

It is readily available at your local library or via Amazon <https://a.co/d/haL87RD>.

We had a wonderful discussion with folks joining in from as far away as Colorado and Florida.

## Upcoming Happenings

### Mortality Movie

Friday, February 28 · 1:45 PM MST  
Eckstrom-Columbus Library, 4350 E. 22nd, Tucson

### Between Life & Death - Terri Schiavo's Story

*Between Life & Death* revisits the story of Terri Schiavo. At 26, Terri suffered a brain injury that left her in a persistent vegetative state, with no hope of recovery. While Terri's husband wanted to let her die, her parents insisted she be kept alive. What began as a personal family dispute in local

Florida courts escalated into an international news event and seminal right-to-die legal battle, involving the highest levels of government.

Drawing on a wealth of archival footage, the film examines how politicians and activists on the religious right harnessed Terri's story and the power of the "pro-life" movement, laying the groundwork for a post-Roe America. *Between Life & Death* is an intimate portrait of a family divided that weaves together past and present to ask universal questions about the government's role in our private lives and who gets to decide if a life is worth living.

Doors open at 1:45, film at 2:00. Discussion to follow. Drinks and snacks provided.

Register via MeetUp here: [Between Life & Death MeetUp Registration Link](#)

### Book Club March Event

Our second Book Club discussion is scheduled for Friday March 14<sup>th</sup> from 4:00- 5:30 p.m. via Zoom. We will be discussing *Hope for the Best, Plan for the Rest*.

The book is available from Amazon. [Click to order Hope for the Best](#)

For MeetUp Registration click here: [Hope for the Best, Plan for the Rest Book Club Registration](#).

Or just send us an RSVP at [ChoiceandDignityInc@gmail.com](mailto:ChoiceandDignityInc@gmail.com)

Also in March, an experimental session at OLLI Central, "**Death Doula Speed Dating**", an opportunity to learn about the services that Death Doulas provide as well as a chance to meet and interview some of Tucson's local doulas. (Open only to OLLI members.)



## Board News:

**Board Meetings:** The Board met on December 12<sup>th</sup>. We are both proud and very happy to announce that **Althea Halchuck** has joined the Board of Directors. Althea brings a wealth of experience to Choice and Dignity. You can learn more about Althea and her work as a Patient Advocate at her website:

**Ending Well! Patient Advocacy, LLC**  
<https://endingwellpatientadvocacy.com>

Due to travel schedules, our next board meeting will be Saturday **February 15th** from 5:00-6:30 pm.

If you would like to sit in, please request the Zoom link at [mail to:ChoiceandDignityInc@gmail.com](mailto:ChoiceandDignityInc@gmail.com)

## Guest Article - Prepare to Die How Doctor and Doula Partnerships Transform End-of-Life Care

*Doctor and doula collaboration can produce compassionate end-of-life support.*

Posted October 2, 2024 | Reviewed by Monica Vilhauer Ph.D. Edited for brevity

Partnerships transform End-of-Life Care. Doctor and doula collaboration can produce compassionate end-of-life support.

### KEY POINTS

- The doctor-doula partnership fills critical gaps in healthcare with comprehensive end-of-life care.
- This personalized care combines medical expertise with a doula's emotional, spiritual, and social support.
- Death doulas enhance death literacy, educate, advocate, and offer emotional support during the dying process.
- Integrating doulas into end-of-life care can create a patient-centered approach, similar to the birthing movement. The end-of-life journey is dynamic and challenging, but it holds immense potential for transformation. With over 35 years as a physician, I've witnessed the limitations of our insurance-based

healthcare system and the remarkable possibilities when medical and holistic providers collaborate. The doctor-and-doula partnership transforms how people experience their final chapters of life, the experience of their loved ones, and how society approaches end-of-life journeys. A recent study found that patients who received care from an end-of-life doula (death doula) increased their death literacy, leading to personal empowerment, positive end-of-life experiences for the family, and personalized deaths for patients.

Traditional medical care often leaves critical elements unavailable due to insurance billing constraints. The doctor-doula partnership addresses this need by integrating medical expertise with compassionate, holistic support. This model fills gaps in the system, creating a new standard of care for those facing complex and terminal illnesses. Doctors are taught to avoid death at all costs, while death doulas see it as something gentle and beautiful. Doulas are trained to provide holistic support during the end-of-life journey, offering comfort, education, and advocacy.

Together, a doctor and doula can provide services beyond standard end-of-life care, including:

- **Companionship and Presence:** Doulas offer compassionate presence throughout the journey, reducing anxiety and isolation.
- **Comprehensive Care:** The integration of medical and holistic support ensures all aspects of a patient's well-being are addressed.
- **Emotional and Spiritual Support:** Doulas help patients find peace and meaning, while supporting families through the complex health journey.
- **Education and Advocacy:** Doulas educate about the dying process and advocate for patients' wishes, ensuring informed decision-making.
- **Rituals and Resources:** Death doulas provide comfort and meaning through rituals and resources, helping cope with loss and grief.

## Doctor and Doula Partnerships—cont'd

- Enhanced Communication: Doulas facilitate better communication between patients, families, and care partners.

This personalized, patient-centered approach is crucial for efficient and compassionate end-of-life care but is often difficult to find within the traditional medical system. The partnership between doctors and doulas represents a significant shift in end-of-life care. By combining medical expertise and holistic support, this model offers a new standard of comprehensive, compassionate care. Similar to the birthing movement, which integrated doulas into medical care, this approach ensures more robust and holistic options are available to those who want them. By working together, doctors and doulas can offer peace, dignity, and comfort to those at the end of their life's journey.

## "Readers Write"

I was surprised by how much I had to do to prepare for my exit. I live alone and my disabled son in Texas needed a lot of my time to prepare the financial means for his care and housing from my investments. My estranged daughter lived in Illinois, and I wanted to leave her some money also. She was not supportive of my involvement in the right to die movement, so I did not inform her of my plans.

I have pancreatic cancer and have macular degeneration in both eyes, so the quality of my life is very poor. I contacted Final Exit Network. They were very helpful, and I showed them my medical records. Soon after I sent my letter stating why I wanted to complete my life, I was interviewed and accepted for their guidance. I was amazed that the approval was good for three years, although the medical prognosis gave me an estimated 1 1/2 years of life left.

I worked with my attorney to have him supervise clearing out my apartment, donating my car, and getting my daughter monetary support.

I had to plan my exit, and who would find my body. I had to have my DNR visible so the emergency folks wouldn't try to resuscitate me.

Then I had to figure out how to get my body to the funeral home for cremation and get the many death certificates to my attorney.

A death doula was very helpful with this whole process since I had no family or friends to be with me. Getting things in place gave me great peace of mind and comfort. Choice and Dignity programs gave me the information I needed, and I am very appreciative of their work. I now want to focus on what joy I can bring to my remaining few months of life.

*Anonymous*

## Prepare to Die - Resources You can Use

**Quarterly Media Highlights - A Curated Selection of Movies, Books, websites, Blogs and T.V. that may interest you.**

### Blog of the Quarter

*Rethinking dementia and the end of life*

By Lewis Cohen, November 10, 2024

<https://>

[www.thegooddeathsocietyblog.net/2024/11/10/rethinking-dementia-and-the-end-of-life/](https://www.thegooddeathsocietyblog.net/2024/11/10/rethinking-dementia-and-the-end-of-life/)



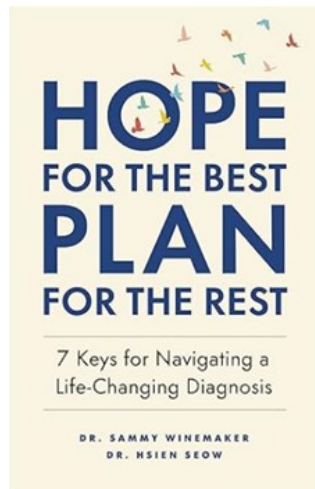
## Book of the Quarter

*Hope for the Best, Plan for the Rest: 7 Keys for Navigating a Life-Changing Diagnosis*  
September 19, 2023, by Sammy Winemaker  
(Author), Hsien Seow (Author)

### The essential guide for every patient and family

The doctor's office called. It's not good news. What comes next? When you are diagnosed with a life-changing illness, it can be overwhelming. While your diagnosis cannot be changed, the way you experience your illness can.

In *Hope for the Best, Plan for the Rest*, Drs. Seow and Winemaker have combined their decades of palliative care research and experience in caring for seriously ill patients. They have harnessed the advice of thousands of patients to create a roadmap that every patient and family will benefit from. In it, they share the 7 keys to unlock a better illness experience and reveal stories, tips and exercises to improve your journey right from diagnosis. These two compassionate experts empower you with practical tools to take charge of your life-changing diagnosis and navigate the health care system with confidence, knowledge, and calm.



This book is about hope in the face of uncertainty. It's about how to live well, be fully informed, and be activated. How to feel more like a person, not a patient. But most of all, how to be hopeful and prepared at every step along the way.

*Editor's Note: We will be discussing this book at our March 14<sup>th</sup> Zoom Book Club event.*

## Podcast and Website of the Quarter

*The Waiting Room Revolution*

*Editor's Note: These are the same folks who have created the Book of the Quarter noted above.*

This is a wonderful source of practical information. Hsien and Sammy have spent their careers helping those who are facing serious illness. For years, they often heard patients and families say they felt unprepared and overwhelmed. Despite years of education, research, and advocacy, they continued to hear patients and families say "Why didn't anyone tell me that sooner..."

They started the Waiting Room Revolution movement because they wanted to improve the patient and family illness experience. They want to build a community to share deeply human stories about caring for others. Through interviews with experts, clinicians, patients and caregivers, they are harnessing the advice of those with lived experience to better prepare those who are just starting their caring journey.

This podcast can help anyone dealing with serious illness. Over the years, we have cared for and interviewed thousands of patients and families who tell us they felt overwhelmed and 'in the dark' during their illness journey. Yet we sometimes heard stories where individuals felt prepared, in control and 'in the know.' What was the difference between these experiences? The answer is the 7 keys. Join your hosts Dr. Samantha Winemaker, palliative care doctor, and Dr. Hsien Seow, health care researcher, as they share real-life stories to explain the 7 keys to being hopeful and prepared when facing serious illness.

The website includes **Illness Roadmaps** that help patients see the path of their disease and allows them to prepare for the next phase. Truly wonderful tools in a medical environment where it is hard to get a straight answer.

For more information visit:  
[waitingroomrevolution.com](http://waitingroomrevolution.com)



## Voices of the Opposition

*Editor's Note: This is a new section for our news letter. We feel that it is important to listen to the opposite points of view so that we can better define our positions and arguments. With that in mind, please take a look at this opinion piece.*

### Assisted dying – mercy or murder? Opinion

There is a way to respect the sanctity of life of those with a terminal diagnosis while withholding or removing impediments to a peaceful death.

By Jonathan Lieberman  
November 18, 2024, The Jerusalem Post  
*Edited for brevity*

A bill proposing the legalization of assisted dying for terminally ill patients is being presented to the UK Parliament, sparking intense debate. If passed, the UK would join several other countries in legalizing assisted suicide for terminally ill adults under strict criteria. Advocates argue it offers a compassionate option for those enduring painful, terminal illnesses, ensuring control over the dying process and respecting personal choice. Critics contend it undermines fundamental medical and ethical principles and may detract from improving palliative care.

As both a physician and an Orthodox rabbi, I am disturbed by this step. The Hippocratic Oath, which includes "I will do no harm," has been a fundamental tenet for healers for over 2,000 years. Our job as physicians is to work tirelessly to palliate pain and alleviate suffering, not to end life. Judaism is sensitive to the suffering of the dying and forbids extending death. The Talmud recounts the story of Rabbi Judah the Prince's death, where his housemaid acted to remove an impediment to his peaceful passing. This translates to the modern injunction for medics to avoid overtreatment and futile attempts to extend life.

However, Judaism treasures every second of life and prohibits actions intended to hasten death. The Talmud likens a terminally ill patient to a flickering candle that becomes extinguished with the slightest perturbation. Physicians must beware of the temptation to extinguish this candle of life, even with humane motives. Judaism's stance on physician-assisted suicide is clear: it is prohibited. If a physician may not hasten the death of a moribund patient, they certainly cannot prescribe a lethal dose of medication for suicide.

The factors to consider with every patient are more nuanced than media portrayals suggest. There is a way to respect the sanctity of life while withholding or removing impediments to a peaceful death. This requires physicians with wisdom, expert clinical judgment, communication skills, and sensitivity to the value of life and family concerns. It also necessitates guidance from spiritual leaders who understand that death is inevitable, as Ecclesiastes 3:1 states, "There is a time for everything ... a time to be born and a time to die." Achieving this balance does not require the legal option of assisted suicide. Instead, it calls for a thoughtful, compassionate approach that honors both the sanctity of life and the dignity of death.

## Prepare to Die - Guest Essay

### If My Dying Daughter Could Face Her Mortality, Why Couldn't the Rest of Us?

Nov. 25, 2024 **By Sarah Wildman**

*Ms. Wildman is a staff writer and editor in Opinion.*

*Editor's note: We have summarized this heartfelt essay for you here. The entire article is available for a limited time from the New York Times via this link: [Click Here to read full essay.](#)*

In this poignant and thought-provoking essay, Sarah Wildman shares her deeply personal journey through her daughter Orli's battle with cancer, offering a powerful critique of how society and the medical system approach end-of-life care for children. Wildman challenges the culture of relentless hope and the reluctance to discuss mortality, advocating for more open conversations about death and better support systems for families facing terminal illnesses.

Drawing from her own heartrending experience, Wildman highlights the critical need for improved palliative care, psychological support, and bereavement services in pediatric oncology. She argues that by confronting the reality of death more directly, we can provide better care for dying children and their families, allowing for more meaningful final experiences, and potentially reducing long-term trauma for those left behind.

This compelling piece not only serves as a tribute to Orli's bravery but also as a call to action for medical professionals, policymakers, and society at large to reconsider our approach to childhood terminal illnesses and grief. Wildman's honest and vulnerable account invites readers to reflect on how we can create a more compassionate and supportive environment for families facing the unthinkable.



## Volunteer Thank you's

**Jennifer Treece** – Jennifer is the person who formats this newsletter for us. We owe her a big debt of gratitude. When Jennifer is not busy with her work or with us, she also volunteers and is President of Tucson Home Sharing.

<https://www.tucsonhomesharing.org/>

Thank you, Jennifer.

Emily in Paris – The fact that Emily actually is in Paris (or New York) always tickles me as I am a fan of the TV Show. Better known to the world as **Emily Benner**. Emily has been helping us to make our website a better resource for you. She is a delight to work with and is the process of establishing her own Death Prep consulting business helping people to get around to the planning tasks that procrastination has kept them from. Need help? Contact Emily at

<mailto:emilyebenner@gmail.com?subject=Planning Services>

Thank you, Emily.

### **Become a Member**

**Although we are a volunteer organization, we do incur expenses. You can help by becoming a paid member or sending a contribution.**

We encourage you to share this newsletter with family and friends and perhaps encourage them to join us.

Donations are always welcome and can be easily made on our website:

[www.ChoiceAndDignity.org](http://www.ChoiceAndDignity.org)

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Choice and Dignity, Inc., PO Box 86886,

Tucson, AZ 85754

More than one-third of nonprofit groups' income comes from bequests – generous members who want to help others after they are gone. Please consider adding us to your legacy by including us in your will.

## Call for Volunteers

We admit it! Many hands make light work, and we need more volunteers. Our devoted Choice and Dignity Board of Directors is seeking help with several endeavors.

**Board Members** – We only have nine people on the Board and we aren't getting any younger. The Board meets every other month, with sub-committee meetings in-between. Past non-profit experience would be helpful but isn't required.

**Discussion Group organizers/leaders** – Would you like to help people discuss issues related to death? You could lead an Exit Café gathering or an Online Book Club discussion. No experience necessary – we can train you.

**Facebook Guru** – Do you know how to post? We'd like to develop our hibernating Facebook page to become a social forum for our members so they can contact each other outside of our events.

Please call 1-800-811-4112 or send us a note at [ChoiceandDignityInc@gmail.com?subject=Volunteering](mailto:ChoiceandDignityInc@gmail.com?subject=Volunteering)

### **Choice & Dignity Board**

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## MEET YOUR BOARD

— Jeannie Fransen



Death is a part of life. I feel it's important to create space for people to be able to talk openly on the subject of death without judgement. I'm a certificate Death Doula for both humans and companion animals. I'm a former special education teacher. I

have a Bachelor of Fine Art and a Master of Special Education.



*All of us at Choice & Dignity  
 would like to wish you a  
 Happy and Healthy 2025*

## Obituary—Anita Hannig

### Remembers Derek Humphry

It is with profound respect that I want to share the passing of Derek Humphry, a towering figure in the history of aid-in-dying. Derek died on January 2, 2025, at the age of 94, from long-standing congestive heart failure.

Derek's contributions to the right-to-die movement are unparalleled. A British-born journalist (b. April 29, 1930), he rose to prominence in 1975 after helping his first wife Jean, who was suffering from terminal breast cancer, end her life. His candid memoir of that experience, *Jean's Way*, became an international bestseller and set the stage for his lifetime of advocacy.

Derek co-founded the Hemlock Society, one of the earliest and most influential right-to-die organizations in the United States. Its dual mission of public education and legislative advocacy made it a catalyst for change. In 1991, his practical guide for patients, *Final Exit*, was on the NY Times Bestseller List for eighteen weeks, an indication of people's discontent with the ways they might die.

Later, Derek co-founded the Final Exit Network and served as president of the World Federation of Right to Die Societies from 1988 to 1990. In 2014, he was awarded the Lifetime Achievement Award by the same organization for his decades of courageous advocacy. Derek played a pivotal role in the development of the Oregon Death with Dignity Act in 1993, helping craft the pioneering statute that became a model for aid-in-dying legislation across the United States. His passionate stance on the ethical equality of euthanasia and self-administration, though not adopted by Oregon's law, underscored his commitment to a [broader vision of end-of-life autonomy](#).

As a longtime supporter and contributor to the Academy of Aid-in-Dying Medicine, Derek offered not only his wisdom but also his candid and respectful engagement on complex issues.

Derek's lifetime of work has left an indelible mark on the right-to-die movement, inspiring both legislative progress and continued advocacy.