

“The greater the ignorance the greater the dogmatism”  
Sir William Osler

Hi Everyone

This week's Departmental Acknowledgement was all set to go when it was displaced by something I read this morning which has a pressing timeliness to it. This week's acknowledgement goes to our surgical colleague Sherif Emil.

I had already made the decision when I received this email from Rick Haber which is copied below and is self-explanatory for this selection.

"I would like to suggest Sherif Emil for departmental acknowledgement for his excellent op-ed piece in the Gazette this morning opposing the legalization of euthanasia. As you know both Sherif and I presented briefs at the Commission, *Mourir dans la dignite*, arguing against the legalization of euthanasia from a pediatric perspective. Our briefs, along with all those against legalization, were ignored. The commissioners had obviously made up their minds before hearing the briefs. Stephen Liben and I also presented a workshop at the CPS AGM two years ago which was very well attended, especially with young trainees obviously deeply interested in the topic. I think this issue is a watershed moral issue for physicians and has vast implications for those of us involved with trainees. What will be the impact of legalized euthanasia on the profession as a whole which is supposed to heal often and cure always. Are we going to start teaching pediatric residents and medical students the way in which one kills a child? Clearly euthanasia is very different from humane, caring, end-of-life care with palliation for pain and suffering. As an Osler Fellow involved with the Physician Apprenticeship program where the total emphasis is on healing and compassion, I think legalizing euthanasia will have a very serious impact on our ability to honestly teach those values which have been at the heart of medicine since Hippocrates."

The legalization of euthanasia is a difficult moral issue. I applaud the efforts of Sherif, Rick and Stephen to get involved in this debate and provide their own medical perspectives. Health professionals should be willing to assume an advocacy role in health issues when it comes to their expertise as it relates to vulnerable populations. Our experience should count. We should be willing to speak out on those issues which matter and which we care about. There are indeed times when we should leave our cocoon of practice and climb on the soap box. There may be some amongst us who disagree with the position taken by Sherif, Rick and Stephen. That should be respected and their voices should also be heard. What we cannot disagree with is that the health professional does have a rightful place in our society as an advocate and I encourage each of you to speak out when so moved. I much prefer a noisy room filled with discussion about topics that matter than a room of silence and acquiescence.

There is a quote attributed to Edmund Burke; "All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing".

Here is a link to Sherif's piece in today's Gazette; <http://www.montrealgazette.com/opinion/Opinion+Legalizing+assisted+suicide+wrong+dangers/7834520/story.html>

Have a great weekend everyone.

Michael