

Compassion in Dying of Oregon

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Oregon's Third Year Report **No Complications And Rarely Used**

After three years we are pleased to announce that Oregon's Death with Dignity Act continues to be the catalyst that is helping Oregonians acquire the best end-of-life care available and to die with dignity.

In February the Oregon Health Division issued its third annual report on the number of Oregonians who used physician aid-in-dying. The numbers were the same as those in 1999.

Twenty-seven terminally ill persons took medication to end a protracted dying process. There were no complications--all slipped into a deep coma within minutes and died peacefully. They were all surrounded by family, loved ones, friends or personal physicians.

Compassion In Dying of Oregon (CID-OR) once again guided most of those who chose assisted death. Twenty-one of the 27 terminally ill people who used Oregon's Act did so under the stewardship of CID-OR.

George Eighmey, CID-OR's Executive Director said, "The law's use is modest, as we predicted all along. We received nearly 100 calls for information and assistance in 2000. Fewer than 1/4 of those people chose a hastened death, but all were comforted by knowing the option was available to them."

Oregon's Assisted Dying Data

'98 '99 '00

Completed Requests	24	33	39
Assisted Deaths	16	27	27
MedianAge	71	70	70

The total number of deaths in Oregon from all causes during 1998-2000 was 90,000. Assisted deaths comprised .0008 of that total number. Compassion guided 50 of the 70 persons who used the law.

Take Over Attempt By Religious Health System Thwarted With Help Of Compassion

Constitutional issues involving separation of church and state were argued in Newport, OR, on behalf of citizens opposed to Providence Health Systems attempt to take over the Pacific Communities Health District.

Taxpayers in the Newport area feared that with the take over of their hospital they would lose access to particular medical services that Catholic institutions refuse to provide.

Arthur LaFrance, Lewis & Clark Law School Professor, called on George Eighmey to testify about working with Providence hospital, in his capacity as chair of an AIDS facility and as director of Compassion In Dying of Oregon. Eighmey testified that he was personally aware that Providence hospital denied patients the right to hasten their deaths and that the hospital had written regulations against a patient hastening their death.

Eighmey testified that four persons in Lincoln County hastened their deaths under the Death with Dignity Act and all of the physicians who prescribed for them were affiliated with the public hospital. After the lengthy trial ended Providence Health System withdrew its bid, allowing local taxpayers to maintain control of their hospital and their end-of-life decisions.

"For those of us in the Newport area concerned with the impact of the Catholic Ethical and Religious Directives being imposed at our local, rural, tax-funded public hospital (via a 29-year contract with Providence to run our public hospital), Mr. Eighmey's testimony, in our civil case in opposition to the contract, was necessary and extremely helpful."

Rose Jade, attorney

Compassion Volunteers Recognized

Jim and Autry Powell are among our first case manager volunteers. Upon the request of Barbara Coombs Lee they agreed to accompany Beck Chew, then the Federation's nurse, on a trip to Southern Oregon to assist a dying man who completed the process to obtain medication to hasten his death. They were honored to assist.

Since then they have volunteered in numerous capacities. They have served not only as case managers, but as envelope carriers, public relations and fundraising advisors and major donors.

A big thanks to Jim and Autry.

Registry Program

Thank you to those who indicated an interest in the registry program.

The program would have allowed you to place your end-of-life documents on a CD which could be accessed by your health care providers. Unfortunately, the response to this idea was not sufficient to merit the program's implementation.

However, a new idea was created from this venture. Compassion In Dying Federation is now offering you a free Health Care Directive form and if you wish to have it placed on a credit card sized CD you may do so for only \$75.

You will be able to carry this disc with you wherever you go. It will speak for you when you are unable to speak for yourself.

Please let us know if you wish to purchase the disc or get a free copy of a health care directive. Call us at 503-525-1956 or email: or@compassionindying.org.

Compassion In The News

Michael Schiavo's wife has been in a coma for more than 10 years. His attorney, George Felos said: "Theresa Schiavo didn't have a written living will. She didn't specify in writing what her wishes were, so we had to rely on oral statements. And when you have a case where family members disagree and you're relying on oral statements, you can end up with years and years of litigation as we did here." This statement points out the need for proper preparation of end-of-life documents according to Compassion's Barbara Coombs Lee. Lee's article on this issue appeared in the Tampa Tribune. Similar articles on this subject and Oregon's 3rd year report were published in the New York Times, San Francisco Chronicle, Washington Post, and The Oregonian.

PRPA Failed But DWD Still Under Attack From Administration

Despite Senator Wyden's brilliant efforts at defeating PRPA (see article below) the new administration continues to threaten Oregonians' right to die with dignity.

The latest word from the White House and the U.S. Attorney General's office is that the administration intends to overrule the will of the voters of Oregon with a possible "reinterpretation" of the Controlled Substances Act. It is our hope that Senator Gordon Smith will persuade the President and Attorney General Ashcroft not to take action

against Oregonians until after the 2002 elections as any such action could jeopardize his chances of reelection.

Sen. Wyden, on the other hand, continues to oppose attempts to reverse Oregon's law though he personally opposes physician aid-in-dying.

If Sen. Smith is successful in stalling the President's intent, we will have at least two more years to prove to the world that Oregon's law is working well.

Affiliate Update

Compassion in Dying of Oregon is one of six affiliates of the Compassion in Dying Federation.

In California, Compassion has launched a precedent-setting lawsuit in which a doctor has been sued for under treating a patient's pain. This case will send the message that physicians are accountable when they abandon their patients to die in pain.

In Alaska, Compassion is waiting for a decision on whether Alaskans have a constitutional right to die on their own terms. Alaska could become the second state to have an Oregon type law.

In Washington, Compassion In Dying E.D., Robb Miller, recently participated in a debate with Faye Girsh, president of Hemlock Society. The topic was "Are Doctors Necessary?" Robb defended the need for doctors in aid-in-dying cases.

Sen. Ron Wyden Honored At Compassion Event For Defeating PRPA In 106th Congress

The U.S. Senate failed to pass the misnamed and dangerous Pain Pain Relief Promotion Act in 2000 due in great part to the political savvy of Oregon's Sen. Ron Wyden.

Compassion In Dying of Oregon together with several other organizations honored Sen. Wyden for his courage in standing up for the voters of Oregon who twice passed the Oregon Death with Dignity Act. More than 50 people praised him during a reception at the Oregon Medical Association in Portland, Oregon, on May 18, 2001.

Sen. Wyden was presented with an ink drawing representing him as a knight defending Oregon from the perils of the evil Pain Relief Promotion Act dragon. The reality is that Sen. Wyden defended all Americans from the chilling effects PRPA would have imposed. The bill was ill advised and potentially harmful to all who face severe pain at the end-of-life.

Governor Barbara Roberts presented Sen. Wyden with the drawing. Her remarks praised him for his willingness to stand up for all Oregonians. She recounted the difficult parliamentary course Sen. Wyden had to navigate to defeat Sen. Don Nickles dangerous bill.

Also recognizing Sen. Wyden were: Sec. of State Bill Bradbury, Sen. Kate Brown and Rep. Dan Gardner, Compassion board members and staff, Dr. Katrina Hedberg, director of Oregon's Health Division, Dr. Linda Ganzini of OHSU, Ann Jackson, the executive director of the Oregon Hospice Association, representatives from the Oregon Medical Association and the Oregon Cancer Society and Hannah Davidson from Oregon's Death with Dignity Legal Defense and Education Center.

Sen. Wyden thanked all of the attendees for their praise. He graciously spent extra time with the guests to answer questions ranging from what he thought would happen to Oregon's law to how he assessed Sen. Gordon Smith's chances of reelection after his refusal to support the voter approved Act.

Our sincere thank you to David Vandervoort, the young artist who drew the ink drawing honoring Sen. Wyden. David is the son of Barbara Coombs Lee. He was born and raised in Oregon and now lives in San Francisco.

Alabama Doctor Continues Generosity

Dr. George Whatley, a retired physician living in Alabama, who donated \$100,000 to Compassion in 1999 and \$25,000 in 2000, continued his contribution in 2001. Dr. Whatley again donated \$25,000 to Compassion this year. In addition, Dr. Whatley announced he will donate this same amount in May of each year hereafter.

Compassion wishes to thank Dr. Whatley for his generous support. His annual donation enables Compassion to provide terminally ill Oregonians our services. Thank you Dr. George Whatley.

Your Help Needed

Compassion is looking for someone who has video tape editing expertise. We were given 17 hours of video tapes taken by the Japanese Public Television network. They contain interviews of one of Compassion's patients during the last few months of her life. We would like to make a single 1/2 hour tape out of it. Call if you can help. 503-525-1956.