

“Death Panels” Are Euthanizing Patients Every Day as Doctors Make Treatment Decisions

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Former Governor Sarah Palin, whether it was intentional or not, certainly began the discussion on end of life issues when she referred to “death panels” in a 2009 debate about federal health care legislation to cover the uninsured in the US.

Governor Palin was referring to death panels in the context of government officials making life and death decisions if/when the government took over our health care system.

However, what the general public doesn't seem to realize is that death panels (if you want to use that label) already exist. Perhaps even more alarming, however is the extent that our medical rights have deteriorated due to an unrelenting anti-life agenda that has slowly transformed our laws – and our culture – into accepting the killing of our most medically vulnerable American citizens.

Patients and family members are now seeing health care professionals empowered to make life and death decisions – quality of life assessments – when a person should or should not receive treatment regardless of what the patient wants or what the family wants.

To make things worse, we have the vast majority of the mainstream media, by the manner in which they report on this issue, desensitizing the general public when it comes to how we treat our medically vulnerable. Ironically, each one of us is now in the position to potentially become a victim of this acceptance. But not only are we seeing physicians having more control over our health care decisions, there has been a fundamental shift when it comes to the mentality of these caretakers, particularly when it comes to treating, or not treating, those with profound cognitive disabilities, Alzheimer's disease, the elderly, and countless other medically vulnerable persons. Add to this the laws that have now changed, and you can see the fear of some and the possibility of a euthanasia explosion occurring in our nation's health care system. Perhaps, as I seem to think, this is already a reality.

No longer, for example, is food and water (via feeding tubes) considered basic and ordinary care. We now define food and water as medical treatment, and as such, depending on the state you live in, can make it rather easy to deny food and water to individuals, even when they have expressed wishes that they want food and water.

In fact, according to a recent report by the Robert Powell Center for Medical Ethics, “the laws of all but twelve states may allow doctors and hospitals to disregard advance directives when they call for treatment, food, or fluids.” So call them what you want, but the reality is that “ethics committees” are now empowered to deny even the most basic

care from each and every one of us, if they decide that is what they want to do.

For many years, Bioethicists Wesley J. Smith has been writing about these issues and the ominous direction we are moving as a nation. In particular, pointing out time and time again how the media, for the most part, is helping push the agenda.

Perhaps the only good news is the fact that there has been so much talk about Obamacare and how it relates to end of life issues and “death panels” that some people are now beginning to pay at least some attention to what is happening. Indeed they should, because not only may it affect their end of life care, but any type of medical treatment they may or may not receive, as well.

How is it that all you hear about from those who support euthanasia and assisted suicide is that a patient's rights must be protected and we must allow the patient to make the decision if they want to take their life. But what happens when it is their choice that they want to live and receive certain treatments? What happens then?

In a recent case involving a hospital in Liverpool, Britain's highest court ruled in favor of the hospital to withhold treatment from a terminally ill man despite the family's opposition. Not to mention that in Belgium, they are now considering

euthanasia for children, if you can believe that. From the AP, [“Belgium considering new euthanasia law for kids.”](#)

Should children have the right to ask for their own deaths? In Belgium, where euthanasia is now legal for people over the age of 18, the government is considering extending it to children — something that no other country has done. The same bill would offer the right to die to adults with early dementia.

All of this is very troubling and we can no longer say this is only happening “across the pond”, so to speak. Every single day, here in the United States, people are being euthanized either by terminal sedation, denial of food and water, or withholding treatment. And I'm sure there are other ways where death is being imposed upon patients.

Sadly, other than some awareness that is being raised, there seems to be no real push back coming from the general public or the organizations equipped to expose this insidious and growing culture of death issue.

Maybe it is due to the fact that we have become a nation so desensitized to the value and dignity of all life that when we see the medically vulnerable, we have convinced ourselves that we are acting out of “compassion” to end their lives, rather than caring for them. Whatever the reasons, and I am sure there are many, as widespread as I believe euthanasia is occurring across our nation's health care facilities, we are only seeing the tip of the iceberg.

