

PRESS RELEASE - October 22, 2004

## PCC ANTICIPATES TEN-YEAR MEMORIAL OF LEGALIZED ASSISTED SUICIDE

Ten years ago, November 1, 1994, the practice of doctor-assisted suicide was legalized by the narrowest of margins in an Oregon referendum. Physicians for Compassionate Care (PCC) expresses on behalf of all its members profound grief for those vulnerable individuals frightened into committing assisted suicide over the past ten years when they could have received good palliative care instead. PCC members, with others, have contributed to stopping the spread of this needless and lethal practice to other states.

Proponents of assisted suicide wildly claimed in 1994 that legalization in Oregon would lead quickly to numerous other states following Oregon. Their prediction could not have been further from the truth. Since 1994, not one state has legalized assisted suicide. In fact:

- Numerous states in recent years have strengthened laws against assisted-suicide, including Georgia, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Michigan, Oklahoma, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, and Virginia,
- State supreme courts, including liberal courts in Florida and Alaska have upheld laws banning assisted suicide,
- The US Supreme Court ruled against assisted-suicide activists twice,
- Voter initiatives promoting assisted suicide have been defeated in Maine and Michigan, as they were in California and Washington,
- Assisted suicide has been defeated in all of the many state legislatures that considered this issue.
- And, the notorious assisted-suicide practitioner, Jack Kevorkian, has been put in jail, where he belongs.

PCC has helped stop the spread of assisted suicide by letting other states know how the Oregon law has failed:

- All overdosed patients to date were given assisted suicide for psychological and social reasons, not one for actual untreatable pain-doctors can treat pain,
- Depressed and demented patients have been given assisted suicide, including the first publicly reported case, the Kate Cheney case, and the Michael Freeland case,
- The HMOs have gotten involved in providing assisted suicide instead of the good care patients need and deserve,
- The state regulatory bodies have become advocates for the law and have failed to report well documented abuses,
- An important study demonstrated that the adequacy of pain care decreased in Oregon since doctors began overdosing patients.
- A claim that the rate of assisted suicide is four times higher in other states than it is in Oregon has been shown to be a false and unscientific claim.

Physicians for Compassionate Care and its members will continue to assist individual patients and their families to access excellent palliative care at the end of life. At the same time, the

organization also will assist other states in their efforts to protect citizens by providing accurate and factual information about the needless and uncaring practice of assisted suicide.