

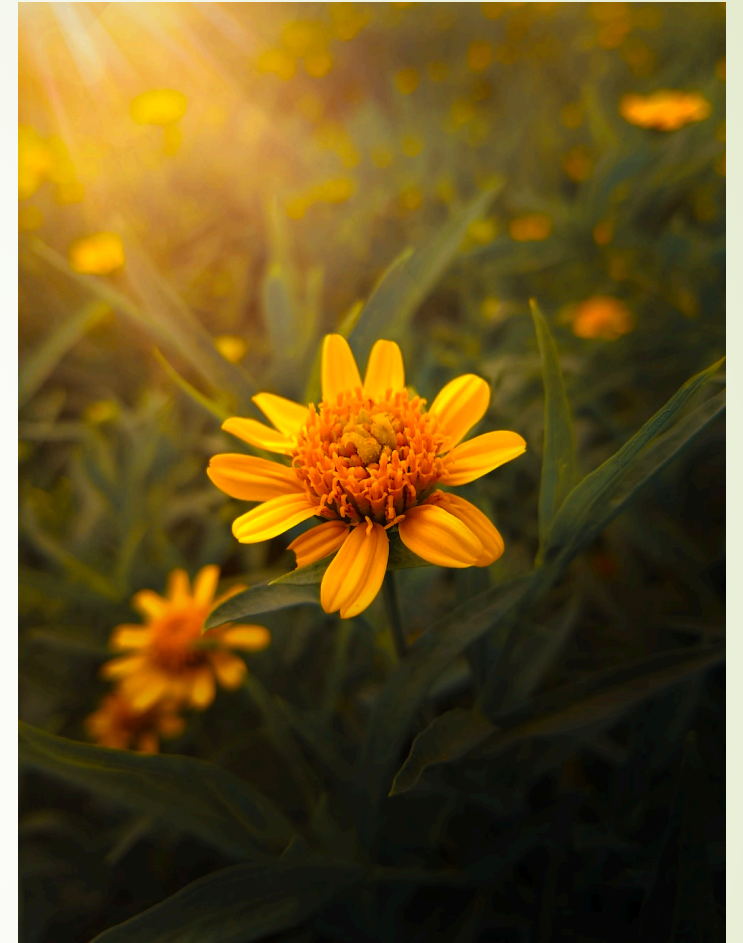
Seminar on Medical Assistance in Dying (MAiD) @ FBC

October 20, 2023

Pastor John Tsang


Dr. Leona Adams

Dr. Joy Liao





Welcome, Introductions, and Overview

1. Lay of the Land - definitions and MAiD legislation in Canada.
 2. Christian physician's reflections and perspectives on MAiD – Dr. Joy Liao and Dr. Leona Adams (video)
 3. Theological Reflection on MAiD – developing a personal ethic and conviction.
 4. Support and Care – for family, neighbor, friends who may be considering MAiD.
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Terminology of Assisted Dying

- **Assisted suicide or physician-assisted suicide**
 - person **takes his or her own life with physician providing meds** to do so
 - essentially element is that death is *self-administered*
- **Euthanasia** from Greek: *eu* = good or well; *thanos* = death
 - administration of a lethal medication **by a health care professional** at the explicit request of a competent adult
- **Medical assistance in dying (MAiD)** = Canadian term
 - includes **both the option for self-administered and clinician-assisted dying**
 - Avoids negative connotation of "euthanasia" – associated with eugenics movement/WWII

How to talk about MAiD?

- A person may “die with MAiD” or “die by MAiD”
- Can refer to a person’s “MAiD journey” or “MAiD death”
- While technically by current definitions it is a form of suicide (“taking one’s own life voluntarily and intentionally”), there is often significant stigma, usually responses of shock and horror, and often complicated grief associated with suicide that is not the case with MAiD
- MAiD is a legal procedure and an end-of-life practice in Canada



Development of MAiD Legislation in Canada



MAiD Legislation in Canada

Landmark Case - Sue Rodriguez - 1993

[CBC 1993 Summary of Case Report](#)





MAiD Legislation in Canada

June 2016 – Medical Assistance in Dying became legal in Canada. People who were eligible were individuals **with a ‘reasonable foreseeability of natural death (RFND)’ (3-6 months)**.

March 2021 – Changes to Bill C-7, removed the phrase, **‘reasonable foreseeability of natural death (RFND)’** because it was deemed unconstitutional. MAiD eligible to many more individuals including people with disabilities and chronic illness. Individuals are excluded from eligibility if mental health is the sole reason.

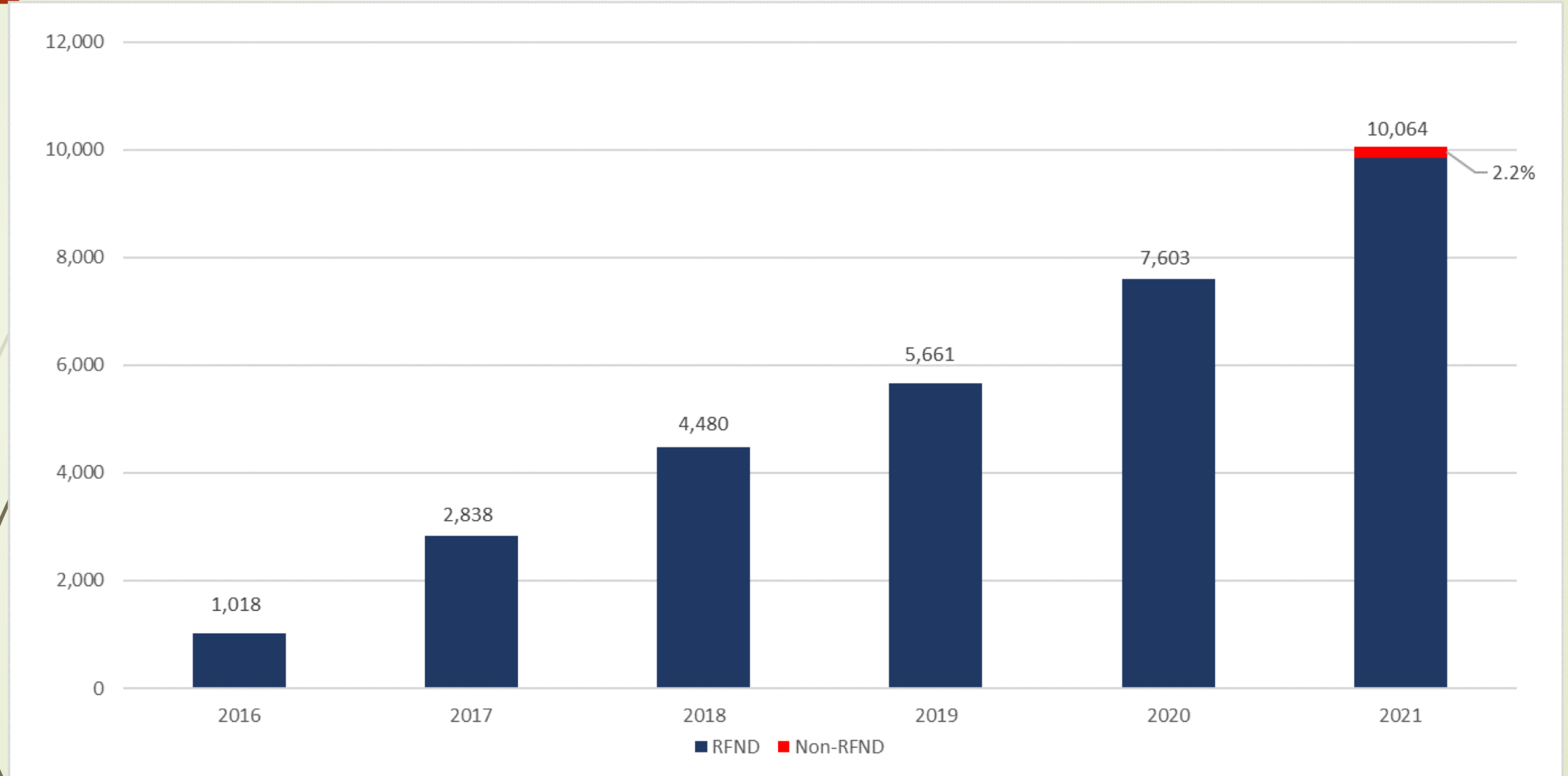
Feb 2023 – Bill C39 extend the temporary exclusion of eligibility solely due to mental illness until Mar 17, 2024 which means that after Mar 17, 2024, individuals are eligible for MAiD solely based on mental illness.

MAiD Legislation in Canada

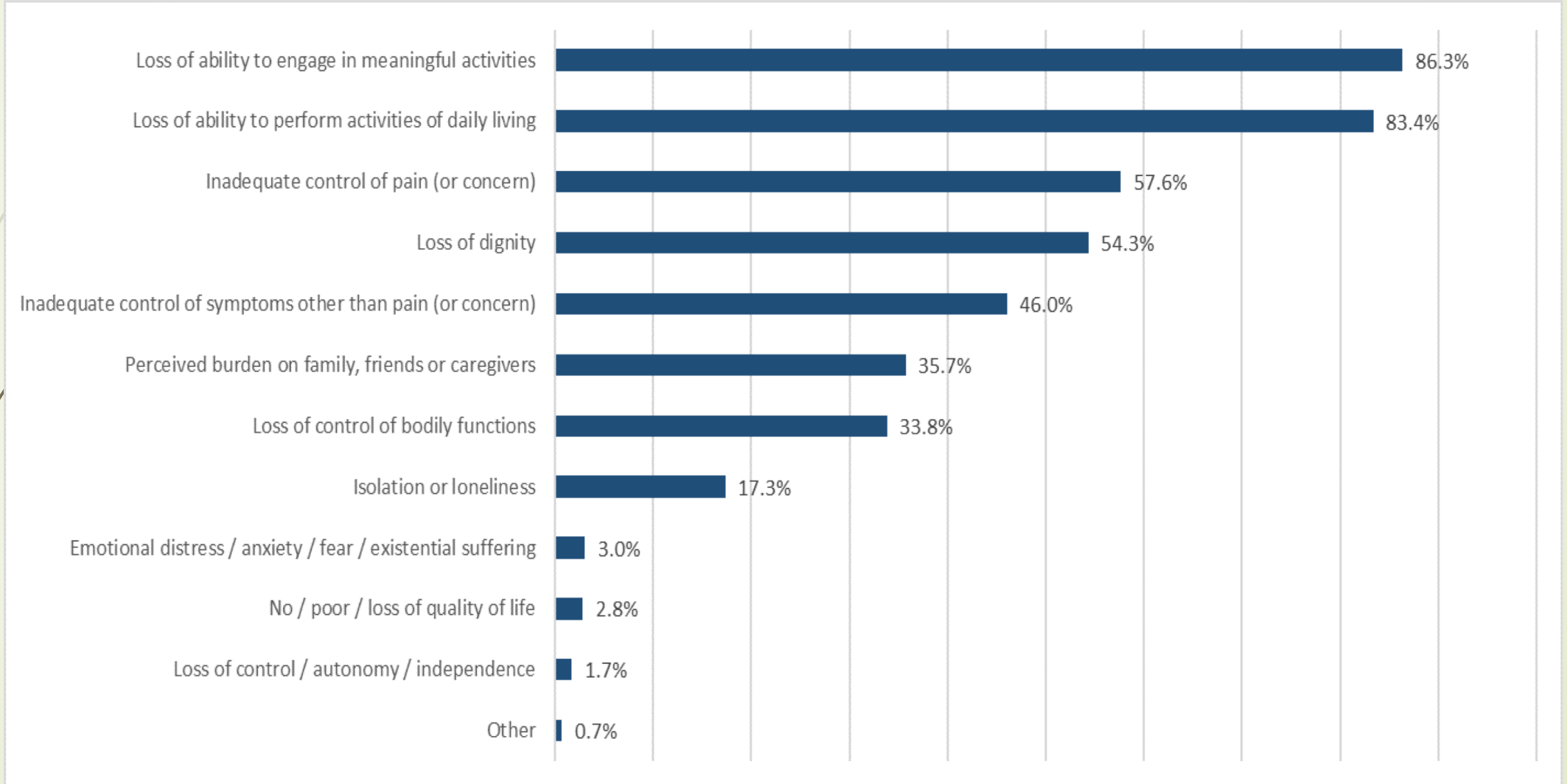
Currently, persons must meet all the following criteria to be eligible for MAiD:

- be 18 years of age or older and have decision-making capacity
- be eligible for publicly funded health care services
- make a voluntary request that is not the result of external pressure
- give informed consent to receive MAiD, meaning that the person has consented to receiving MAiD after they have received all information needed to make this decision
- have a serious and incurable illness, disease or disability (excluding a mental illness as the primary disease until March 17, 2024)
- be in an advanced state of irreversible decline in capability
- have enduring and intolerable physical or psychological suffering that cannot be alleviated under conditions the person considers acceptable

MAiD rate in Canada



Nature of Suffering of those who received MAID (2021)

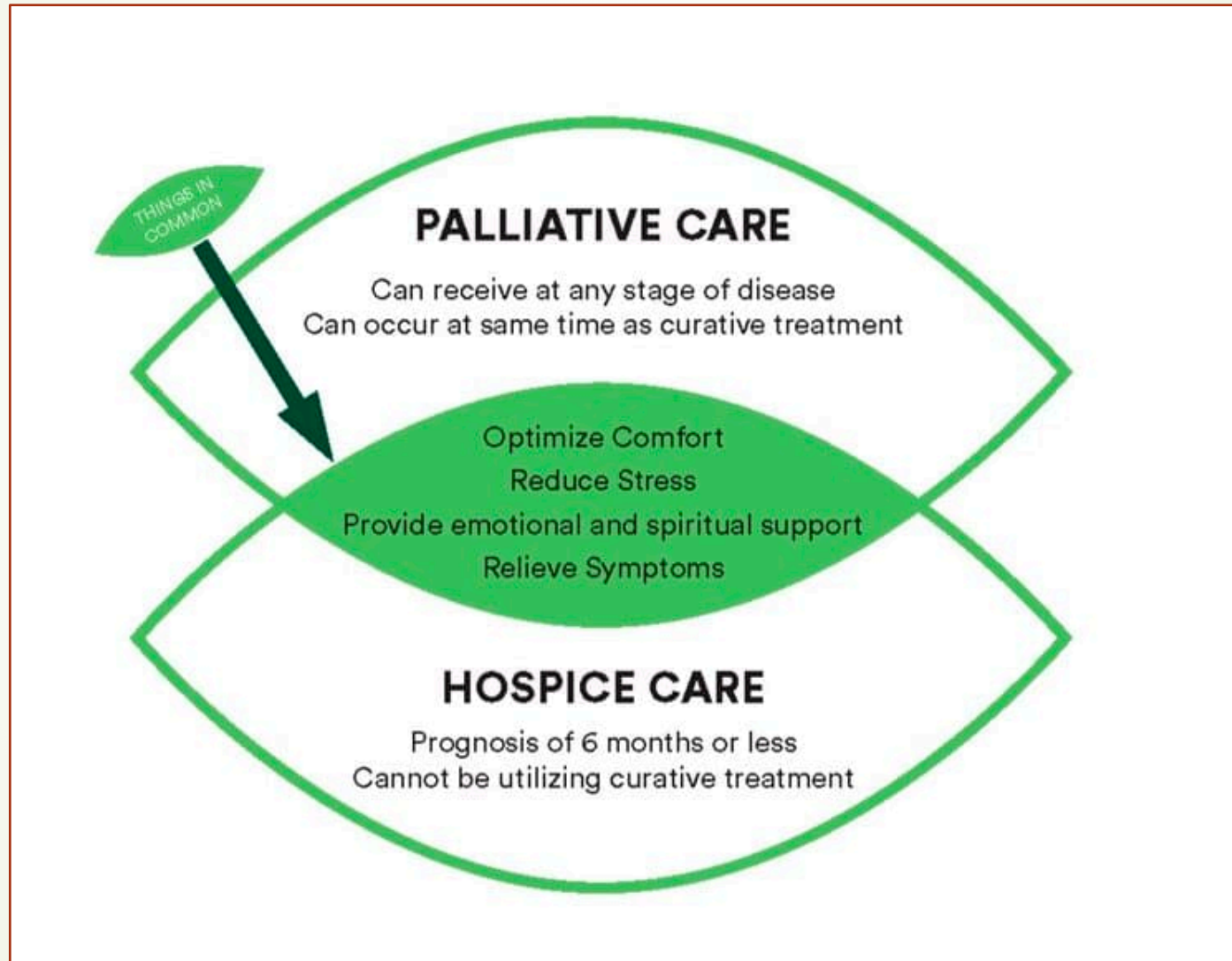




Palliative care

- **Palliative care** = specialized holistic form of healthcare for individuals and families living with a life-limiting illness that is usually at an advanced stage
- Goals of care:
 - provide comfort and dignity for the person living with the illness
 - help achieve the best quality of life for this individual and their family
- Includes
 - pain management
 - symptom control
 - social, psychological, emotional and spiritual support
 - caregiver support

Palliative care vs Hospice care



Palliative care and MAiD?

- Vast majority of people considering or asking for MAiD also have palliative care needs
- Every effort should be made that these individuals and their families receive the full complement of palliative care services to meet their needs
- What palliative care is not always able to address or fix: loss of autonomy and control, lack of meaning of life, not having the will to continue to live
- Palliative care and MAiD are not mutually exclusive



MAiD and Mental Health (Recorded Interview with Dr. Leona Adams)



Biblical & Theological Considerations

1. Created in the image of God. Sanctity and beauty of life.

Gen 1:27 *So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.*

Psalms 139:13-16 *For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them.*

Job 12:10 *In his hand is the life of every living thing and the breath of all mankind.*

Exo 20:13/Deut 5:17 You must not murder (6th Commandment)

Biblical & Theological Considerations

2. Joy and Suffering is part of the human experience. Our calling is to live faithfully.

John 16:33 I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."

Story of Job

Psalms - Psalmist experience of all kinds of suffering

Psalms 22:1 Why have you forsaken me?

Psalms 42:3 My tears have been my food day and night, while they say to me all the day long, "Where is your God?"

Matt 27:46, Jesus Suffering And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" that is, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

Biblical & Theological Considerations

3. God is able to turn or redeem suffering into something meaningful.

Romans 5:1-5

*Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. 2 Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. 3 Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that **suffering produces endurance, 4 and endurance produces character, and character produces hope,** 5 and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.*

Biblical & Theological Considerations

4. Suffering can form character within us as we rely on other people to help us. It can also offer the possibility of the caregiver to be formed deeper in Christlikeness.

I am aware of the tremendous amount of suffering that my patients, their families and their communities go through. I empathize with them. I acknowledge that suffering is not always ennobling. But suffering can be made more bearable through the love and help of others. One of the lessons a suffering person must learn is to accept help from others, and the lesson for the rest of us is to offer help.

(Euthanasia – Christian Perspective, Dr. Alex Tang pediatrician, Professor of Pediatrics and theology in moral ethics)

Biblical & Theological Considerations

5. Community that demonstrates love for our neighbours, care for the vulnerable, the weak, and the sick.

Matt 22:37-40

37 And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. 38 This is the great and first commandment. 39 And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. 40 On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."

James 1:27

27 Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.

2 Cor 1:3-4

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, 4 who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

Biblical & Theological Considerations

6. End of our lives as the final discipleship lesson on following Jesus.

John 21:18-19

18 Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you used to dress yourself and walk wherever you wanted, but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will dress you and carry you where you do not want to go.” 19 (This he said to show by what kind of death he was to glorify God.) And after saying this he said to him, “Follow me.”

Biblical & Theological Considerations

6. End of our lives as the final discipleship lesson on following Jesus.

This change was not an overnight revolution. As God's reality dawns more on my heart, slowly and painfully and through many tears, the simplest pleasures of this world have become sources of daily happiness. It is only as I have become, for lack of a better term, more heavenly minded that I can see the material world for the astonishingly good divine gift that it is.

I can sincerely say, without any sentimentality or exaggeration, that I've never been happier in my life, that I've never had more days filled with comfort. But it is equally true that I've never had so many days of grief. One of our dearest friends lost her husband to cancer six years ago. Even now, she says, she might seem fine, and then out of nowhere some reminder or thought will sideswipe her and cripple her with sorrow.

Tim Keller, (1950-2023), [Growing My Faith in the Face of Death](#), published in The Atlantic. Diagnosed with pancreatic cancer at the age of 70, died at age of 72.



Reflections on the Life and Death of Christ

When you reflect on the life of Christ, what can you say or conclude about the way that he faced death?

What role is there for suffering in the Christian life?

What lessons might there be for the person who is dying as she/he remain faithful to God?

What lessons might there be for the family, community, or society for the one who enters into suffering in surrender to Christ?

Four Traditional Approaches to Ethics

1. **Utilitarianism** – whatever works, practical, whatever results in the happiness of the person and the elimination of pain or suffering.
2. **Law Based (deontological, absolutes)** – ethical decisions made based on a moral code, law, rules. Eg. 10 Commandments.
3. **Situational Ethic** – not based on absolute but on the particular situation or context with the intent that the result be fair, good, loving, maximizing harmony, reducing discord, and to enrich humanity.
4. **Virtue Ethic** – with the goal of developing virtue or character in the person eg. Kindness, goodness, patience, temperance, courage, humility, faithfulness. How will what I decide produce virtue within me?





Walking with or Journeying with someone who is considering MAiD

1. Can you be a friend to someone who is facing a very serious decision if you disagree with that person's choice?
2. Suspend personal judgment on the other person's final decision. Separate your need to convince the other to see this the same way as you.
3. LISTEN, try to understand, and invite person to reflect and process her/his own thoughts on this.
 - How did you come to this point of such a serious decision?
 - How is your family feeling about this?
4. Pray for Spirit's guidance in helping the person find a purpose, reason, or meaning to live.
5. Simply be a non-judgmental, non-anxious presence to the person. Wait to be asked what you think about this issue. (Presupposes that you have reflected on this issue personally).



Where do we go from here?

1. Form your own personal conviction on this issue through theological and Biblical reflection and through learning in community.

(Why would you or why would you not choose MAiD if you find yourself nearing the end of life with intolerable suffering.)

2. Learn how to journey with and care for someone towards the end of life regardless of MAiD or natural death.

Resources

1. For caregiver, spouse, or family member - [A Long Letting Go: Meditations on Losing Someone You Love](#) by **Marilyn McEntyre**
2. For those nearing the end of life - [A Faithful Farewell: Living Your Last Chapter with Love](#) by Marilyn McEntyre
3. Regent Course Intensive in Jan 8-12, 2024, [Health Care and the Christian Life](#) (1 or 2 credit hour course) taught by Dr Quentin Genuis, an Emergency Physician at St. Paul's Hospital in Vancouver, and the Physician Ethicist for Providence Health Care.
4. For those aging, reflecting on end of life - [Aging Faithfully](#) by Alice Fryling, spiritual director, Renovare
5. A non-Christian doctor perspective, one of the earliest physician providing MAiD in Canada. [This is Assisted Dying](#) - Stefanie Green, MD
6. [Canadian Government website on MAiD](#)
7. From Leona Adams on Mental Health and Suicide – [Talk Suicide](#)

