
The Massachusetts Medical Society

OPPOSES

Question 2: Prescribing Medication to End Life

In November, voters will have the opportunity to vote on Question 2, Prescribing Medication to End Life.

We are **OPPOSED** to Question 2

- ✦ The proposed safeguards against abuse are insufficient. Enforcement provisions, investigation authority, oversight, or data verification are not included in the act. A witness to the patient's signed request could also be an heir.
 - ✦ Assisted suicide is not necessary to improve the quality of life at the end of life. Current law gives every patient the right to refuse life-saving treatment, and to have adequate pain relief, including hospice and palliative sedation.
 - ✦ Predicting the end of life within six months is difficult; sometimes the prediction is not accurate. From time to time, patients expected to be within months of their death have gone on to live many more months — or years. In one study, 17 percent of patients outlived their prognosis.
 - ✦ Doctors should not participate in assisted suicide. The chief policy making body of the Massachusetts Medical Society has voted to oppose physician assisted suicide.
- ✦ The Massachusetts Medical Society reaffirmed its commitment to provide physicians treating terminally ill patients with the ethical, medical, social, and legal education, training, and resources to enable them to contribute to the comfort and dignity of the patient and the patient's family.

Lynda Young, MD, MMS past president, testified about the MMS policy at a hearing of the House Judiciary Committee on March 6, 2012:

“Allowing physicians to participate in assisted suicide would cause more harm than good. Physician assisted suicide is fundamentally incompatible with the physician's role as healer.

“Instead of participating in assisted suicide, physicians must aggressively respond to the needs of patients at the end of life ... Patients must continue to receive emotional support, comfort care, adequate pain control, respect for patient autonomy, and good communication.”

For more information and references, visit www.massmed.org/Question2.



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SOCIETY ALLIANCE

The Massachusetts Medical Society is a statewide organization representing more than 24,000 physicians and medical students.

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