



Insurance decisions in assisted suicide cases

By Letters to the editor on April 16, 2016 at 3:15 AM

A commentary by Barbara Coombs Lee, head of Compassion & Choices, put forth some confusing and misleading information about a New York assisted suicide proposal and criticized a brain cancer patient leading the fight against it (“Allow terminally ill a peaceful escape,” March 20). Under the proposal, a patient that a doctor has determined has six months or less to live can receive a lethal drug overdose from a pharmacist.

She failed to note in either her background or her piece that she is a former HMO executive. As such, she is very familiar with the business of health insurance and how much these companies have to pay out when someone wants to be treated for their serious disease or disability. Legalizing assisted suicide leaves the doors wide open for health insurance companies to deny coverage of expensive treatments for the terminally ill, in favor of approving the far less expensive lethal drugs for suicide. This horrific danger has already been documented in Oregon where the bill Ms. Coombs Lee authored has been in effect for nearly two decades.

Additionally, she didn’t mention that opposition to assisted suicide is not partisan or ideological. Opponents include the Medical Society of State of New York, the Hospice and Palliative Care Association as well as advocates from disability rights, patients’ rights and suicide prevention communities.

Hopefully, legislators in Albany are getting both sides of the issue.

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