Systemic Psychotherapy's Contribution to Debates about Assisted Dying

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(NOT speaking on behalf of my employer)
It’s all relational: so where are the relationship experts?

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VdzkJL37db8
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XhMG3KR1L8
What’s the plan?

• Briefly: definitions and international landscape
• Introduce some case studies
• Lengthily: discussion – what do you think?
Terms

- Assisted suicide
- Assisted dying
- Euthanasia (voluntary and involuntary; active and passive)
- Physician assisted suicide
International state of play

- Australia
- USA
- Canada
- Netherlands
- Switzerland
What’s known?

- Views of doctors/nurses
- Views of older people/people living with impairments/palliative care patients
- Very few papers from mental health professionals
What happens in palliative care?

- Frequently asked
- Burdensome or futile?
- Who is this for?
Case studies

• **Case 1:** Maggie is in her 70s, has advanced breast cancer. BRCA1. Prognosis: 6m

• Widow (husband: bowel cancer, pain, acute bleed).

• Two children, the youngest of whom has arranged an appointment with a systemic family therapist to process her feelings about her mother’s illness.
- **Case 2:** Richard 50s, MS for 15y. Prognosis: 1-2 decades.
- Married, 3 daughters one of whom is practicing Catholic.
- Fears of considerable impairment, pain and distress.
• **Case 3:** Lynne, 48, stoma with significant impact on physical and mental wellbeing.
• History of feelings of loss of control.
• Family stories privilege being strong.
• Socially isolated.
What role could you play?

- Convening a family session
- Theories, approaches, techniques
- Neutrality
- GRACES
Where to from here?

• Anticipated Bills in Australia
• Continuing debate worldwide,

Shouldn’t family therapists be part of the dialogue?