Importance of the Pharmacist Perspective in Conversations About Medical Aid-in-Dying

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Healthcare is moving towards an interdisciplinary approach. Pharmacists are completing residencies and obtaining credentials in specialty areas involving patients who may pursue medical AID.^{4, 5} They are well-positioned to assist in many clinical tasks outlined in this paper. We would encourage inclusion of pharmacists in these conversations.

To the Editors:

We read the article by Buchbinder et al. entitled “Health Care Providers’ Experiences with Implementing Medical Aid-in-Dying in Vermont: a Qualitative Study,” published in the *Journal of General Internal Medicine*, with great interest.¹ We agree with the authors; engagement in medical aid-in-dying (AID) is more complex than responding to patient requests and writing prescriptions. We wish to highlight this research is missing the important perspective of the pharmacist.

Due to drug availability and affordability challenges, there have been significant changes in the medication regimens used for medical AID.² As an alternative to secobarbital or phenobarbital, patients are now frequently prescribed a compounded combination of diazepam, digoxin, morphine sulfate, and propranolol.³ While outcomes from drug distribution challenges are not well documented, this may translate to patient access issues as participation in medical AID may become limited to pharmacies and health-systems with compounding capabilities, infrastructure to navigate special distribution processes, and/or willingness to assume the financial risk of ordering high cost drugs.

It is also important to consider how widespread adoption of medical AID will impact pharmacy practice. Pharmacists frequently serve as the last interaction between a healthcare professional and patient and pharmacists are legally required to counsel patients on new prescriptions. This raises important issues on the protection of conscience, pharmacist corresponding responsibility, and educational needs for the dispensing of lethal medications.

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