

news reviews

assisted suicide, stem cells, abortion

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Hawaii becomes sixth state to legalise assisted suicide

Hawaii has joined California, Colorado, Oregon, Vermont, and the state of Washington to become the sixth state to legalise assisted suicide. Due to come into effect on 1 January 2019, the 'Our Care, Our Choice Act' was signed into law on 5 April 2018 by Governor David Ige. This Act requires that a patient requesting assisted suicide be over the age of 18, with a terminal illness, and deemed to be in the last six months of life by two doctors. At this stage they are permitted to self-administer a cocktail of lethal drugs.

However, many groups believe that this Act leaves vulnerable patients at risk, saying that the views and fears of many of those in the medical and disability communities have been ignored. In addition, this Act legally forces doctors to record the immediate cause of death as the terminal illness. Where the term 'assisted dying' may be considered a stretching of the truth, forcing doctors to mislabel the cause of death as a terminal illness when the cause was in fact barbiturate overdose is nothing short of mandatory lying.

SPUC 6 April 2018. bit.ly/2lu7yt0

The Christian Institute 12 April 2018. bit.ly/2JZxs4Y

stem cell trial offers new hope to MS sufferers

Results from a new trial hold out hope for a revolutionary treatment option for patients suffering from multiple sclerosis. The international trial involved a technique previously used only for cancer patients - autologous haematopoietic stem cell transplant (HSCT). Rather than using embryonic stem cells, stem cells are harvested from the patient's own blood and bone marrow. Their immune systems are obliterated using chemotherapy drugs, and then re-booted using their own stem cells.

Three years down the line, the treatment was

unsuccessful in only 6% of cases, whereas current standard drug treatments had up to a 60% rate of failure. Overall those in the HSCT study had symptom improvement, where those on standard treatments had symptom deterioration.

While this treatment is expensive, it is about the same price as the annual cost of some multiple sclerosis drugs, but with far better prognosis. Although neither available nor suitable for all, this is likely to become the new standard treatment, giving hope for a new lease of life to many multiple sclerosis patients.

The Christian Institute 20 March 2018. bit.ly/2rsT5Dq

BBC News 18 March 2018. bbc.in/2pm4X9R

senior Conservative challenges lawmakers to consider reducing 24 week limit for abortion

Maria Caulfield, the Conservative Vice Chair for Women has called for a debate to consider whether the 24 week limit for abortion is too late. She made the point that although when the 24 week limit was first introduced, babies were not considered viable, those now born prematurely have the same healthy life expectancy of the general population.

Without being overtly critical, Caulfield maintained that current legislation should be challenged, since as it stands Britain has '... one of the most liberal abortion laws in the world'. She argued that our laws should be based on the evidence of what medical research says is medically possible.

Furthermore, she stands against the decriminalisation of abortion currently being advocated by the British Pregnancy Advisory Service and others. As the law currently stands, two doctors are required to sign off on an abortion, something Caulfield says helps protect vulnerable women. ■

The Christian Institute 2 March 2018. bit.ly/2EJlsm