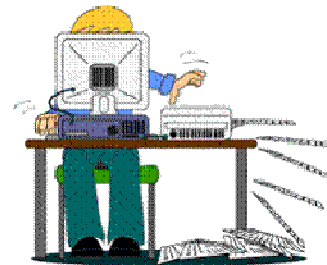


## Media Watch

...is distributed weekly to colleagues active or with a special interest in **hospice palliative care and end-of-life issues** – to help keep them abreast of current, emerging and related issues, and to inform discussion and encourage further inquiry. Following is an annotated listing of recent articles, reports, etc., with links to the original source.

4 August 2008 Edition | Issue #56



Compilation of Media Watch 2008 ©

Compiled & Annotated by Barry R. Ashpole

**Euthanasia and assisted suicide: Scroll down to [U.S.A.](#) and 'Oregon's Dying with Dignity Act: Medical ethics glitch.'**

## Canada: National

### **Compassionate Care Benefit: Eligibility amended**

Eligibility for the Compassionate Care Benefit has been amended. In addition to "accumulating 600 insured hours in the last 52 weeks," applicants must now show that their "regular weekly earnings from work have decreased by more than 40%." A search of the Human Resources & Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) and the Services Canada websites, and also major news outlets in Canada, offered no firm indication of when this amendment was first introduced and to what extent it was publicized. It seems reasonably safe to assume, however, that the amendment may have been made in the fall of 2007. Appendix VI - Employment Insurance Benefits Summary (dated 10.11.07.) seems to be the first mention of this additional condition of eligibility.

Resources:

- HRSDC (Compassionate Care Benefit web page):  
[http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/en/ei/faq/faq\\_compassionate\\_care\\_individuals.shtml](http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/en/ei/faq/faq_compassionate_care_individuals.shtml)
- HRSDC (Appendix VI - Employment Insurance Benefits Summary):  
[http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/en/employment/ei/premium\\_rate/2008/appendix\\_6.shtml](http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/en/employment/ei/premium_rate/2008/appendix_6.shtml)

### **Provinces call for national strategy to deal with nationwide shortage of cancer specialists**

*GLOBE & MAIL* | Online report – 4 August 2008 – A looming medical crisis created by the resignations of a team of Newfoundland oncologists is prompting urgent calls from other provinces for a national strategy to deal with the cross-country shortage of cervical and ovarian cancer specialists. Canada has only about 60 gynecologic oncologists, a highly specialized field. Promises by Newfoundland's Health Minister to airlift displaced patients to other areas for treatment have alarmed other cancer centres ... too swamped to handle an influx of patients.  
<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/servlet/story/LAC.20080804.CANCER04/TPStory/National>

## Canada: The Provinces

### **Home care goes high-tech in Ontario**

CANWEST NEWS SERVICE | Newswire report – 28 July 2008 – Toronto's Saint Elizabeth Health Care has chosen Windsor as the site of a pilot project to test the use of tablet computers that officials hope will make a big difference in the care a person receives at home. For example, the new technology will enable a nurse to use a built-in camera to photograph a patient's wound, e-mail the image to a wound specialist, and receive directions on how to treat it, all while still in the patient's home. That way, the wound can be treated faster and more effectively. Saint Elizabeth Health Care is one of the first health-care companies in Canada to receive the portable electronic tablets, roughly the size of a clipboard. The tablets and the software system they run on allow nurses to access a client's chart and history with a few clicks, fill out forms online, take photographs and instantly communicate with doctors and specialists in their offices.

<http://www.canada.com/topics/news/national/story.html?id=41784902-17ca-41c6-94f6-9b4784cf4aa8>

## U.S.A.

### **Automation seen to aid informed consent**

AMEDNEWS | Online report – 4 August 2008 – To improve the informed consent process in a way that leads to patients who are, in fact, more informed, some physicians are turning to technology. These doctors are finding that using more interactive, automated processes helps patients retain more information. They also allow patients to ask questions as they come up, rather than trying to think of them during the comparatively pressurized situation of an office visit. And a few doctors also have found that an automated informed consent process can help provide a defence against liability. <http://www.ama-assn.org/amednews/2008/08/11/bica0811.htm>

### **Debate over prescribing narcotics: Treatment for pain divides physicians**

KENTUCKY | *Lexington Herald-Leader* – 3 August 2008 – While federal investigators try to track down Kentuckians who go out of state to secure prescription pain pills to sell or abuse, many Kentucky doctors are wrestling with questions of how and when to treat thousands of legitimate patients who need those same drugs. It's all part of perhaps the hottest national debate in medicine today. The discussion revolves around two camps. One holds that pain essentially is an illness in its own right that should be treated aggressively, up to and including the use of powerful narcotic drugs. The other side contends that doctors must be much more conservative, offering narcotics only when they're absolutely sure patients actually need the potentially addicting drugs and are not seeking them to abuse them. Some nationally known experts, like Dr. Russell Portenoy, a New York pain specialist, say the debate has left many doctors reluctant to prescribe narcotics because they fear being investigated by authorities and many patients reluctant to seek help because they fear being seen as 'pill users.' <http://www.kentucky.com/211/story/478782.html>

- MedScape Medical News: 'Pain may be undertreated in nearly half of all cancer patients.' <http://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/578041>

### Links

Please alert this office if you encounter any difficulty. Every effort will be made to find an alternative means of access. Alternatively, copy/paste the URL into the address bar of your browser. All links are confirmed as being active before Media Watch is distributed; they remain active, however, for only a limited period of time.

## **ALS Association and Hope Hospice team up for patients**

TEXAS | Hope Hospice (New Braunfels) press release - 2 August 2008 – The ALS Association and Hope Hospice are working together to offer the best care possible to ALS patients and their families. As experts in end-of-life care, the Hope Hospice clinical team must continually maintain their education on the symptoms and characteristics of many diseases, including ALS, also commonly known as Lou Gehrig's Disease. <http://www.pr.com/press-release/98272>

## **What's your doc thinking? Web site offers clues**

NBC | Online commentary – 30 July 2008 – Anyone paying the slightest attention to the digital world knows of the huge success of social networking sites, with Facebook and MySpace in the starring roles. There are now sites for lawyers, marketers, real estate agents, stamp collectors, those undergoing divorce, and just about any category imaginable – including doctors. The biggest site for physicians, [Sermo.com](http://www.Sermo.com), not only is becoming a huge community – 72,000 so far with a couple thousand more signing on every month – it has the potential to bring profound change to American medicine. Its founder Dr. Daniel Palestrant, a 34-year-old surgeon with an MBA, believes it could one day supplant the American Medical Association as the voice of America's doctors. <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/25888967/>

## **1.4 million children in America care for chronically ill parents and grandparents**

CALIFORNIA | *Sun-Sentinel* – 30 July 2008 – As many as 1.4 million children in the U.S. provide care for an older adult, according to a landmark study issued by the National Alliance of Caregiving and the United Hospital Fund. Their ages range from 8 to 18 and 400,000 of them are under the age of 12. These young caregivers are evenly balanced by gender, with boys making up 49% of the total, and girls 51%. Seven in 10 child caregivers (72%) are caring for a parent or grandparent. [http://www.sun-sentinel.com/features/lifestyle/sfe-sfp\\_reverse\\_0,3992441.story](http://www.sun-sentinel.com/features/lifestyle/sfe-sfp_reverse_0,3992441.story)

## **Hospice community encourages all Americans ... to speak out against hospice rate cuts**

NATIONAL HOSPICE & PALLIATIVE CARE ORGANIZATION (NHPCO) | Press release – 29 July 2008 – The NHPCO is asking all Americans who understand the importance of hospice care for dying individuals and family caregivers to contact President Bush and ask him to stop the regulation that will cut hospice rates under Medicare. A proposed rule, scheduled to go into effect on 1 August 2008, would significantly impact hospice reimbursement. <http://www.marketwatch.com/news/story/hospice-community-encourages-all-americans/story.aspx?guid=%7B61392E11-0401-4FE0-A339-45F6DD8D370E%7D&dist=hppr>

- Illinois (Passages Hospice, Elgin): **'Hospice patients have goals too, just like the rest of us ...'** <http://www.emediawire.com/releases/2008/8/prweb1171364.htm>
- Texas (*Star-Chronicle*, Fort Worth): **'New regulations give hospice patients more control over their treatment.'** <http://www.star-telegram.com/804/story/798216.html>

From Media Watch dated 06.23.08.

- PRNewswire-USNewswire: **'Hospice programs nationwide urge Congress to act ...'** [http://www.redorbit.com/news/health/1441360/hospice\\_programs\\_nationwide\\_urge\\_congress\\_to\\_act\\_on\\_behalf\\_of/](http://www.redorbit.com/news/health/1441360/hospice_programs_nationwide_urge_congress_to_act_on_behalf_of/)

### **[Back Issues of Media Watch](#)**

Back issues of Media Watch are held on file for a limited time and available on request.

## Discussion is the key to end-of-life care planning, study finds

CALIFORNIA | University of California (San Francisco) press release – 28 July 2008 – People who have discussed their end-of-life care wishes with family, friends, and physicians before they are in need of such care are much more likely to have taken the next step of filling out an advance directive, according to a study led by researchers at the San Francisco VA Medical Center. Such discussions, therefore, should be encouraged, the study authors say. The researchers recommend that policy makers consider making oral advance directives discussed with physicians legally binding in all states, since many more people talk about end-of-life care with their physicians than spell out their wishes in written form. In most states, only written advance directives have legal standing. <http://pub.ucsf.edu/newsservices/releases/200807283/>

**N.B.** A patient's wishes regarding personal care and medical treatment that are expressed verbally are legally binding in Ontario and can override previously written wishes.

- *Metapsychology: Advance Directives in Mental Health* (Book review)  
[http://metapsychology.mentalhelp.net/poc/view\\_doc.php?type=book&id=4379&cn=135](http://metapsychology.mentalhelp.net/poc/view_doc.php?type=book&id=4379&cn=135)
- Connecticut (*Bristol Press*): 'Terry Schiavo legal battle underscores uncertainties ...'  
[http://www.bristolpress.com/site/news.cfm?newsid=19874869&BRD=1643&PAG=461&dept\\_id=665526&rfi=6](http://www.bristolpress.com/site/news.cfm?newsid=19874869&BRD=1643&PAG=461&dept_id=665526&rfi=6)

## Easing the end of life

NURSE.COM | Online report – 28 July 2008 – Hospitals across the U.S. are finding they are ill-prepared to deal with the social, physical, emotional, and quality-of-life issues presented by an increasing influx of elderly and chronically ill patients with complex issues. To support hospitals in delivering quality end-of-life and palliative care, seven healthcare facilities across the country are serving as learning labs and hosting free site visits through the Hospital-Based Palliative Care Consortium. <http://include.nurse.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20080728/CRT02/307290033>

## Oregon's Dying with Dignity Act: Medical ethics glitch

*THE OREGONIAN* | Online editorial – 28 July 2008 – Opponents of physician-assisted suicide are fired up ... over an ethically questionable provision of the Oregon Health Plan. The conflict came to light in a recent newspaper report ... (that) described the plight of ... a 64-year-old woman with lung cancer. After her oncologist prescribed a cancer drug that would cost \$4,000 a month ... (the woman) was notified that the Oregon Health Plan wouldn't cover the treatment, but that it would cover palliative, or comfort, care, including, if she chose, doctor-assisted suicide. That presents an unacceptable conflict. The state health program should not be in the position of denying chemotherapy to terminally ill patients while offering to pay the cost of helping them die. <http://www.oregonlive.com/editorials/oregonian/index.ssf?/base/editorial/1217289319150190.xml&coll=7>

- Fox News: 'Oregon offers terminal patients doctor-assisted suicide instead of medical care.'  
<http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,392962,00.html>
- Florida (NewsChief): 'Culture of death grows in Oregon.'  
[http://www.newschief.com/article/20080731/NEWS/807310313/1013/opinion&title=Culture\\_of\\_death\\_grows\\_in\\_Oregon](http://www.newschief.com/article/20080731/NEWS/807310313/1013/opinion&title=Culture_of_death_grows_in_Oregon)

**N.B.** Scroll down to [International](#) and 'Call for assisted death option' for a listing of current or recent reports offering a global perspective on the issues of euthanasia and assisted suicide.

## Alzheimer's patients react poorly to 'elderspeak'

US NEWS & WORLD REPORT | Online report – 28 July 2008 – Alzheimer's patients may often become upset and even act out when nurses or other caregivers use "baby talk" to converse with them, a new study shows. Researchers who taped the interactions of nursing home staff and people with moderate Alzheimer's found the residents often became more agitated and resistant to care if they were addressed as infants. "People who have dementia are trying to maintain their sense of being a person. If their concept of being a person is that they are a competent person, and someone is talking to them like they are an infant, that might be distressing," speculates lead researcher Kristine Williams, an associate professor at the University of Kansas School of Nursing. <http://health.usnews.com/articles/health/healthday/2008/07/28/alzheimers-patients-react-poorly-to-elderspeak.html>

**N.B.** Scroll down to [Books & Resources](#) and '**Dementia: the past makes sense of the present.**'

- PRNewswire-USNewswire: '**Americans with memory concerns fall short of talking with doctor.**' <http://www.marketwatch.com/news/story/alzheimers-foundation-america-survey-americans/story.aspx?guid=%7B9CB101D6-1F8D-44B9-8219-7B1BA244479B%7D&dist=hppr>

## HouseCalls program will bring the doctor to the patient at home

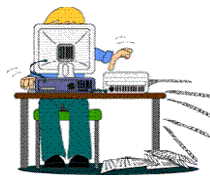
ILLINOIS | *Belleville News Democrat* – 27 July 2008 – To help celebrate its 90th year of advancing home health care, the Southwestern Illinois Visiting Nurse Association is turning back the medical clock a century or two. With its new HouseCalls program, the Swansea-based group is returning to the day when doctors grabbed their little black bags, jumped in their buggies and urged ol' Dobbin through heat, rain and snow to some sick patient's house. Now, there are a few more horses under the hood of those buggies, but the group's goal is the same: caring for those who would have a difficult time getting to a doctor's office so they can spend more months or years in the comfort of their own home. <http://www.bnd.com/living/story/409494.html>

- California (*Press-Enterprise*, Riverside County): '**End of federal doctor's house calls program.**' [http://www.pe.com/localnews/rivcounty/stories/PE\\_News\\_Local\\_S\\_pilot27.2baab06.html](http://www.pe.com/localnews/rivcounty/stories/PE_News_Local_S_pilot27.2baab06.html)
- California (*Jamaica Plain Gazette*): '**Urban Medical now makes house calls.**' <http://jamaicaplainingazette.com/node/2902>
- Illinois (*Belleville News Democrat*): '**House call is ... comforting to patients.**' <http://www.bnd.com/living/story/409493.html>

Resource:

- National Film Board of Canada documentary *House Calls* written up in *The Temmy Latner Centre for Palliative Care Newsletter* (Fall, 2002, p.7): <http://www.tlpc.org/pdf/NewsletterFall02.pdf>

### Barry R. Ashpole



My involvement in palliative and end-of-life care dates from 1985. As a communications specialist, I've been involved in or responsible for a broad range of initiatives at the community, regional, provincial and national level. My work focuses primarily on advocacy, capacity building and policy development in addressing issues specific to those living with a life-threatening or terminal illness – both patients and families. In recent years, I've applied my experience and knowledge to education, developing and teaching on-line and in-class courses and facilitating workshops for frontline care providers.

## Inside the grieving brain

*NEWSWEEK* | Online report – 26 July 2008 – The dead never quite leave us; they return in dreams and reveries, they inhabit the pictures on our walls and lurk in our cell phones and disk drives. Some people find dreams comforting, while for others there is nothing as sad as the moment when the vision of a dead parent, spouse or child slips away with the dawn, and they awaken reluctantly to a day their loved ones will never see. But as researchers have turned their scanners on the dark realms of the psyche that grief inhabits, they are discovering the unsettling power of waking reveries. How one relates to them can make a large difference in how one recovers from the death of a loved one. This insight comes from studying what therapists call "complicated grief" – grief that doesn't go away. <http://www.newsweek.com/id/149006>

- Alaska (Elmendorf Air Force Base): **'Bereavement, grief, mourning.'** <http://www.elmendorf.af.mil/news/story.asp?id=123108949>
- West Virginia (*Beckley Register-Herald*): **'I'm sorry you lost your loved one.'** [http://www.register-herald.com/features/local\\_story\\_207212803.html?keyword=topstory](http://www.register-herald.com/features/local_story_207212803.html?keyword=topstory)
- *Washington Post*: **'Once way to handle grief: Get over it.'** <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/07/25/AR2008072502784.html>
- Australia (*Sydney Morning Herald*): **'Good grief! Let those tears flow.'** <http://www.smh.com.au/news/heckler/good-grief-let-those-tears-flow/2008/07/30/1217097329040.html>
- Canada (*Ottawa Citizen*): **'Such small moments.'** <http://www.canada.com/ottawacitizen/news/observer/story.html?id=934cfe10-9f34-4cf7-93c6-a112607e94de>

## International

### Organisations call for recognition of palliative care and pain treatment as human rights

U.K. | *Medical News Today* – 4 August 2008 – The International Association for Hospice & Palliative Care, the Worldwide Palliative Care Alliance, and different organisations from around the world have issued a 'Joint Declaration & Statement of Commitment' calling for the recognition of palliative care and pain treatment as human rights. The declaration and statement have been jointly developed and signed by representatives of several international and regional organisations from Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe, Latin America, North America, and Western Europe. This is the first time that a 'Joint Declaration' has been developed and signed by a collection of leading international organisations in the field of palliative care, hospice, pain, cancer, HIV/AIDS and others. <http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/117069.php>

### Funerals are a dying industry!

U.K. | *Sunday Mercury* (Birmingham) – 2 August 2008 – Funeral directors ... say they are struggling to cope with a combination of economic woes and a sharp drop in the ... death rate. <http://www.sundaymercury.net/news/midlands-news/2008/08/03/funerals-are-a-dying-industry-66331-21457725/>

- U.S. (Voice of America): **'Arlington Cemetery at center of controversy over media coverage of military funerals.'** <http://www.voanews.com/english/2008-07-31-voa7.cfm>

## Biographies give comfort to terminally ill

NEW ZEALAND | Stuff.co.nz – 1 August 2008 – South Auckland Hospice volunteers listen to patients talk about their lives and then turn them into biographies for the family they are leaving behind. Telling the story is a therapeutic experience for the patient. When you're facing death, it's an opportunity to put life in perspective.

<http://www.stuff.co.nz/stuff/sundaystartimes/auckland/4638254a22395.html>

## End-of-life care: Into the sunset

U.K. | *The Economist* – 31 July 2008 – “Most things may never happen: this one will.” That stark allusion to death, penned by the poet Philip Larkin, sums up the philosophical starting-point of the hospice movement, which began in Britain 40 years ago and has since become influential, in various ways, in almost every corner of the world. Given that your time on earth is bound to finish one day, assuring a decent quality of life in the final months and years often makes better sense than trying to prolong a painful existence for a short period; so in many cases, loving care and pain relief should take priority over aggressive intervention. When Dame Cicely Saunders, who founded the Saint Christopher's Hospice in London in 1967, first aired those ideas, the medical world was hostile. Now her beliefs enjoy wide acceptance.

[http://www.economist.com/world/international/displaystory.cfm?story\\_id=11848584](http://www.economist.com/world/international/displaystory.cfm?story_id=11848584)

- *The Economist*: 'Ageing populations: Things to look forward to.'  
[http://www.economist.com/world/international/displaystory.cfm?story\\_id=11849226](http://www.economist.com/world/international/displaystory.cfm?story_id=11849226)

## Older people are being denied home help services

IRELAND | *Irish Times* – 30 July 2008 – Older people are being denied home help services due to a lack of staff and funding, a new survey has found. The Irish Association of Social Workers research showed funds were available for new clients seeking services in just one of 22 areas for which data was available last week. The survey found that home help hours had been cut in four areas and there were waiting lists in 16 areas. Irish Association of Social Workers chairman John Brennan said cutbacks were pushing older people into care and into an already troubled hospital system. <http://www.irishtimes.com/newspaper/ireland/2008/0730/1217368580499.html>

### Quotable Quotes

#### 'The value of a slow death.'

*As I stood over the man – my job blocking the late fall sun from obscuring the heart monitor—the sense of the sudden tearing of this man from life hit me. His son had no chance to thank his father for coming to all his soccer games. No time to reminisce about the fun times they may have spent together. The son had no chance to express his love for his father by caring for him in his final illness. He was gone and nothing could be altered for the better or worse. What issues will remain unresolved for this man's family? What would have been done differently had they known it was his last few days? Watching this man's partly opened, unseeing eyes and ineffective jolting from successively powerful defibrillations; seeing his son standing there with eyes not yet taking in how drastically his life was changing, I got the feeling a slow death – perhaps even a little too slow – was better than this. Cancer was a gentler form of dying – one that allowed reconciliation, remembrance and rejoicing in a loving relationship. Not that this happened in all patients who knew they were dying; certainly not. But the potential was there, and the choice was in our hands.*  
**Romayne Gallagher, MD** (*The Medical Post*, 9 May 2000).

## **World makes gains in battle against AIDS**

UNAIDS | *Globe & Mail* (Toronto, Canada) – 30 July 2008 – Investments in HIV-AIDS prevention and treatment programs seem to finally be producing results, with notable declines in the number of people infected with the AIDS virus and dying from the disease, according to a new report. In addition, the number of people worldwide living with HIV-AIDS has stabilized and treatment has risen sharply, according to the 2008 Report on the Global AIDS Epidemic produced by UNAIDS. <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/servlet/story/RTGAM.20080730.waids30/BNStory/specialScienceandHealth/home>

## **End-of-life strategy to ensure quality care for dying patients: Nursing perspective**

U.K. | *Nursing Times* – 29 July 2008 – The U.K.'s end-of-life strategy outlines how patients should be cared for to ensure they experience a "good death." It points out that "how we care for the dying is an indicator of how we care for all sick and vulnerable people." Many patients end up dying in acute hospitals and may experience care that is far from ideal. Families and carers may not be involved in end-of-life decisions, patients may receive continued treatment when it is not in their best interests, and may not be enabled to return home to die if that is their wish. Hospitals often do not recognise that providing care for the dying is one of its core roles, so staff is not trained in this or taught to recognise that death does not always represent a failure in healthcare. [http://www.nursingtimes.net/ntclinical/2008/07/endoflife\\_strategy\\_to\\_ensure\\_quality\\_care\\_for\\_dying\\_patients.html](http://www.nursingtimes.net/ntclinical/2008/07/endoflife_strategy_to_ensure_quality_care_for_dying_patients.html)

- U.K. (*Yorkshire Evening Post*): 'The issue none of us can avoid.' <http://www.yorkshireeveningpost.co.uk/letters-to-the-editor/The-issue-none-of-us.4351669.jp>
- U.K. (*Yorkshire Post*): 'We make such a fuss about being born, yet we just sweep death under the carpet' <http://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/features/We-make-such-a-fuss.4353693.jp>

## **Patients with learning difficulties dying unnecessarily**

U.K. | *Daily Telegraph* – 29 July 2008 – Patients are being ignored and their conditions left undiagnosed or untreated because some parts of the National Health System see only their disability and not their illness, the results of a year-long inquiry ordered by the government has concluded. It recommends that all of the 1.5 million Britons with learning disabilities should receive a check up from their GP at least once a year, to pick up underlying health problems. Health service staff should also receive extra training on how to treat people with learning disabilities. <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/2469761/Patients-with-learning-difficulties-dying-unnecessarily,-inquiry-finds.html>

### **Was Something Missed or Overlooked?**

If you come across a media report, journal article, etc., relevant to hospice palliative care or end-of-life issues not mentioned in this edition of Media Watch, please alert this office so that it can be included in a future issue of the weekly report. Thank you.

## Call for assisted death option

U.K. | Press Association – 28 July 2008 – Dying people should be given the option of having an assisted death if the suffering becomes unbearable, according to a recent report. The Charter for Dignity at the End of Life calls for a "fundamental shift" in how end-of-life care is managed and delivered. The document, launched by Dignity in Dying ... promoting patient choice at the end of life, claims there is "an overwhelming majority" of people who want more choice about where they die, pain relief, access to quality health care and not to have life prolonged against their wishes. <http://ukpress.google.com/article/ALeqM5hA1cTbbOYhz1jRYusZdF3jhJecA>

During the past week or so:

- Australia (ABC News): **'MP won't support euthanasia bill.'** <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/07/30/2318673.htm>
- Czech Republic (LifeNews): **'Parliament will debate measure to legalize assisted suicide.'** <http://www.lifenews.com/bio2521.html>
- Italy (Reuters): **'Right-to-die case faces legal challenge ...'** <http://www.reuters.com/article/newsMaps/idUSL18388820080731>
- Italy (EuroNews): **'Euthanasia calls get louder in Italy.'** <http://www.euronews.net/en/article/01/08/2008/euthanasia-calls-get-louder-in-italy/>
- Spain (Catholic News Agency): **'Only a totalitarian state gives cover for death ...'** <http://catholicnewsagency.com/new.php?n=13374>
- U.K (LifeNews): **'New survey finds U.K .doctors oppose legalizing assisted suicide by 2-1 margin.'** <http://www.lifenews.com/nb149.html>
- U.K. (Medical News Today): **'Murder law review will see genuine mercy killers facing life sentence ...'** <http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/116523.php>
- U.K. (Scotsman): **'The unnecessary dangers of assisted suicide.'** [http://news.scotsman.com/opinion/The-unnecessary-dangers-of-assisted\\_4333298.jp](http://news.scotsman.com/opinion/The-unnecessary-dangers-of-assisted_4333298.jp)
- U.S. (Pacific North West Local News): **'Assisted suicide is a dying movement.'** <http://www.pnwlocalnews.com/opinion/26182579.html>

## Journal Articles of Interest

### **What oncologists tell patients about survival benefits of palliative chemotherapy and implications for informed consent: qualitative study**

*BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL* (Online edition), 2008;337:a752. The authors conclude that during consultations information given to patients about survival included numerical data ("about four weeks"), an idea of timescales ("a few months extra"), vague references ("buy you some time"), or no mention at all. In most consultations (26/37) discussion of survival benefit was vague or non-existent. Most patients were not given clear information about the survival gain of palliative chemotherapy. To aid decision making and informed consent, the authors recommend that oncologists sensitively describe the benefits and limitations of this treatment, including survival gain. <http://press.psprings.co.uk/bmj/august/cancer.pdf>

## Recordings or summaries of consultations for people with cancer

COCHRANE DATABASE OF SYSTEMATIC REVIEWS | Online abstract – 16 July 2008 – Many people find it hard to remember medical consultations. Providing a record of the conversation may help. This review of trials examined the effects of giving people with cancer audio recordings or written summaries of consultations. Most people found them useful as a personal reminder, to inform their families or friends or to play to their general practitioners. People tended to remember more of the information they were given; some were more satisfied with the information they received. <http://mrw.interscience.wiley.com/cochrane/clsysrev/articles/CD001539/frame.html>

## End-of-life care and organ procurement for transplantation: Palliation or euthanasia?

CRITICAL CARE MEDICINE, 2008;36(8):2481-2482. Scroll down to Letters to the Editor. Text unavailable (i.e., protected content). Contents page: <http://www.ccmjournal.com/pt/re/ccm/currenttoc.htm;jsessionid=LQICCB1SHxcHprt2vG3hp9lxZI2JVjBQQL7G0QFbGL8MJJvNGpQLI9820885271181195629!8091!-1>

## Palliative management of Parkinson disease

JOURNAL OF PHARMACY PRACTICE, 2008;21(4):262-272. Parkinson disease is a progressive neurodegenerative disease that commonly affects elderly persons. In the absence of neuroprotective or curative therapies, currently available therapies only provide symptomatic benefit. Progression to advanced Parkinson disease is often accompanied by functional dependence with increased risk of admission to a long-term care facility. Patients with advanced Parkinson disease also experience other distressing motor and non-motor conditions, such as motor complications, dementia, depression gastrointestinal distress, orthostatic hypotension, pain, and psychosis, which can be a challenge for clinicians to manage. The presence of distressing symptoms along with the fact that Parkinson disease remains incurable necessitate discussion on a palliative care approach to this disorder. This article discusses the symptomatic management of distressing symptoms encountered in the long-term care resident with Parkinson disease, including motor complications and non-motor features. **N.B.** Link unavailable.

Resources:

- U.S. (*Journal*, Ithaca, NY): 'Dramatic gains for patients with Parkinson's.' <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/25888967/>
- U.S. (Medical College of Wisconsin): 'The facts about Parkinson's disease.' <http://healthlink.mcw.edu/article/1031002268.html>

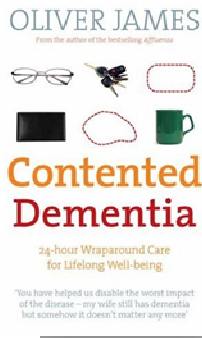
## Arts & Entertainment

### **Tuesdays with Morrie: The Play**

U.S. | *Daily Facts* (Redland, CA) – 28 July 2008 – I enjoyed ... *Tuesdays with Morrie*. The play was poignant, and it made me think about my life, which is something I can't say for most movies I see. The story involves two men – and only two men. The characters are sports writer Mitch Albom and his former college professor Morrie Schwartz, a man dying of Lou Gehrig's disease. The play involves a series of visits Albom made to Schwartz during the last months of his life. As Schwartz inches toward a miserable death, he imparts last bits of wisdom that make Albom take stock of what's important. As I mentioned before, the story made me look at my own life, which I think is the point. As a man dying, Schwartz is in the best position possible to dole out advice on how to live. [http://www.redlandsdailyfacts.com/news/ci\\_10022614](http://www.redlandsdailyfacts.com/news/ci_10022614)

## Books & Resources

### Dementia: the past makes sense of the present



U.K. | *Daily Telegraph* – 29 July 2008 – Oliver James, one of Britain's leading clinical psychologists, has popularised his speciality via several best-selling books. However, he knew nothing about Alzheimer's disease and dementia until he met his mother-in-law, Penny Garner. "The author Terry Pratchett scarily describes having Alzheimer's as 'like stripping away your living self a bit at a time'," he says. Garner doesn't see it that way, but then she has become an expert during 30 years of working with dementia patients and carers. Over the past eight years, since he married Garner's daughter Clare, James has come to understand the subject much better, and is so impressed by his mother-in-law's approach, SPECAL (Specialised Early Care for Alzheimer's), that he decided to write a book about it, *Contented Dementia - 24 hour Wraparound Care for Lifelong Well-being*. "Those who care for people with dementia often say

that the person they knew and loved is gone. The great revelation was to discover that the mind and emotions of the person are still there."

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/health/main.jhtml?xml=/health/2008/07/28/hdementiaint128.xml>

- U.K. (*The Economist*): 'Alzheimer's disease: A tangled tale.'  
[http://www.economist.com/world/international/displaystory.cfm?story\\_id=11849226](http://www.economist.com/world/international/displaystory.cfm?story_id=11849226)

Resources:

- Canada (Alzheimer's Society): 'What is Alzheimer's disease.'  
<http://www.alzheimer.ca/english/disease/whatisit-intro.htm>
- U.S. (Alzheimer's Association): '2008 Alzheimer's Disease Facts & Figures.'  
[http://www.alz.org/national/documents/report\\_alzfactsfigures2008.pdf](http://www.alz.org/national/documents/report_alzfactsfigures2008.pdf)

## Worth Repeating

### Lesson in life and death: Pupils build dying teacher's coffin

Australia | *TheAge.com.au* – 14 February 2007 – A Dutch primary school teacher dying of cancer is overseeing one last class project: her pupils are making her coffin. Eri van den Biggelaar has just a few weeks to live after being diagnosed last year with an aggressive form of cervical cancer. She asked the woodwork teacher, a friend, to build a coffin for her. "Why don't you let the children make it?" replied Erik van Dijk. Now pupils of the school in Someren ... have been helping with the finishing touches. They have already sawed more than 100 narrow boards and glued them together. Only the lid needs to be completed. The coffin now stands in the middle of one of the classrooms. Although Miss van den Biggelaar can no longer teach, she has looked at sketches of the coffin and is being kept up to date about it by pupils, aged between four and 11, who visit her at home. "Life and death belong together," she said. "The children realised that when I explained it to them. I didn't want to be morbid about it; I wanted them to help me. I told them: 'Where I will go is much nicer than this world.' "None of the children considered it creepy or was afraid and nobody felt traumatised, she said. Parents of the children involved all gave their consent. <http://www.theage.com.au/news/world/lesson-in-life-and-death-pupils-build-dying-teachers-coffin/2007/02/13/1171128974213.html>