

The Passy Press

Letter to the Editor

From: davidvforrest@undisclosed.com

To: Nick Gardiner enpg@thepassypress.com

Date: December 31, 2014 10:33 a.m. EST

Subject: Essay on Death With Dignity by Charles Hamlin, MD

Dear Sir,

Nice essay. It doesn't deal with what is a sound mind, though.

For example, depressed people often change their mind after treatment and are grateful for it, and those who don't complete also usually change their mind, or return to suicidal behavior only later under unrelated circumstances. Those who survive jumps from the Golden Gate Bridge report changing their mind as soon as they are over the railing and into the air. Something as simple as the lithium ion demonstrably prevents suicidal ideation and behavior--implying deranged chemistry. The suicide rate is lower where lithium is in the drinking water.

Not all suicidal people are depressed though, but that doesn't mean they are of sound mind. Nor does long planning vs. impulsivity. Any thoughts of being a burden to loved ones are far outweighed by the weighty and everlasting legacy for them and their children and grandchildren and great-grandchildren and so on.

Also the semantics are influential. What if it were entitled Self-Murder and Mortality. Selbstmord, the literal meaning of suicide.

Finally, current standards of care dictate that all patients should receive enough pain relievers to be comfortable.

Sincerely,

David Forrest

David V. Forrest M.D. is a graduate of Princeton University and Columbia P&S and is a Viet Nam veteran. He is a Clinical Professor of Psychiatry at Columbia P & S, a Founder of the E. E. Cummings Society and Founding Editor of SPRING:

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