



April 8, 2014

[Re: How do you neutralize death?, April 8](#)

Ms. Echlin is incorrect that the Canadian Nurses Association (CNA) is driving the “dying with dignity” groups or else that we want to neutralize death or terms like euthanasia and assisted suicide. CNA’s work in matters of death is instead focused on improving palliative or end-of-life health care, especially increasing access. We strongly believe that RNs have a fundamental role to play in promoting advance care planning. Through therapeutic relationships with patients and families, RNs can help individuals prepare and share their wishes with others in case one day they are not able to refuse or consent to treatment. CNA’s role is to support RNs as they assist patients and families: by informing them of their options, helping them communicate with one another and guiding them to their best decisions.

CNA’s official position on end-of-life care is rooted in the values outlined in our *Code of Ethics for Registered Nurses*, which directs nurses to “foster comfort, alleviate suffering, advocate for adequate relief of discomfort and pain and support a dignified and peaceful death.”

We appreciate that this issue is rife with passionate debate. Yet, CNA remains steadfast that nurses must practise according to the law and be guided by their standards of professional practice and our code of ethics. We also remain committed to being a part of ongoing, open and honest communication about end-of-life care in Canada and to advocating for improved access to supportive end-of-life care.

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