

Navigating the spheres of assisted death

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The issues of assisted death and palliative care in Canada should be discussed in the context of human rights, states a commentary published in *CMAJ (Canadian Medical Association Journal)*.

While the topic of assisted death has been a recent discussion in Canada, we cannot address until the issue of equal access to palliative care has been resolved. In Canada, at least 70% of residents lack access to palliative care and for those who do have access, it is inequitable.

"The equalization of palliative care must occur before legalization of [assisted suicide](#), otherwise, there runs the very real risk that a decision to request assisted death is not fully consenting because of the lack of meaningful choice in the ability to alleviate pain and distress," writes Mary Shariff, Assistant Professor, Faculty of Law, University of Manitoba.

She cites articles 12 the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the right to enjoy the highest attainable standard of health as requiring that the scope of the Canadian [palliative care](#) system be fully optimized before assisted death is legalized.

"The decisions surrounding our policies on health care must be considered in the broader context of the express commitments and aspirations that we have made as a country. If our tax dollars fall short of providing integrated end-of-life care to all Canadians equally, then our legislators ought to acknowledge and incorporate that fact before moving forward with the legalization of assisted death," concludes the author.

Provided by Canadian Medical Association Journal

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