

Swiss organisation extends assisted suicide to elderly

May 22 2014

A Swiss assisted suicide group has expanded its services to help elderly patients who are sick but not terminally ill end their lives, it said Thursday.

Exit A.D.M.D., a group that provides assisted suicide in the French-speaking part of Switzerland, officially broadened the scope of who it can help during its general assembly last month, its leader Doctor Jerome Sobel told AFP.

The group's larger sister organisation, Exit, which operates in the German and Italian speaking parts of the country, is planning to follow suit in a few days, he added.

"We are helping people who are sick and opt for quality of life over a quantity of time surviving with a poor quality of life," Sobel said, insisting the organisation's activities remained "well within Swiss law."

"Passive" assisted suicide has been legal in Switzerland since the 1940s, provided the person is in his or her right mind and anyone helping them is not motivated by self-interest or [financial gain](#).

A number of groups work to help the terminally ill and those suffering who wish to end their lives to do so, usually by supplying them with a [lethal dose](#) of a drug they must administer themselves.

Exit A.D.M.D., which only assists in suicides for people who live in

Switzerland, helped 155 people—mainly terminally ill cancer patients—end their lives last year.

Exit helped 459 people end their lives in 2013.

Sobel said the membership of his group is ageing and many people had demanded that it officially include the infirm but not terminally ill elderly among those it is willing to help.

He said that if a person over the age of 75, who is for example already deaf and going blind, "calls us and asks us to help them, we will help them."

"If we don't, some might accuse us of abusing them, since forcing them to continue living can be torture," he explained.

Last year, the European Court of Human Rights called on Switzerland to clarify the guidelines for [assisted suicide](#) after an octogenarian who wanted to end her life failed to convince doctors to assist her because she was not ill enough.

Sobel said his [group](#)'s decision to broaden the official scope of who to assist in dying had not been impacted by that case.

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Citation: Swiss organisation extends assisted suicide to elderly (2014, May 22) retrieved 20 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2014-05-swiss-organisation-suicide-elderly.html>

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