VERMONT MEDICAL SOCIETY RESOLUTION

Vermont Medical Society Policy on End-of-life-Care

As adopted at the VMS Annual Meeting on November 4, 2017

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the VMS revise and update its Policy of Physician Assisted Suicide to read:

VERMONT MEDICAL SOCIETY POLICY ON END-OF-LIFE CARE

The Vermont Medical Society supports access to high quality end-of-life care.

Our physicians actively endorse comprehensive palliative care, which includes: the use of state of the art pain and symptom control; the provision of secure and supportive environments through Hospice; and the freedom of the patient to choose or refuse all medical treatment.

Physicians and other health care practitioners must aggressively respond to the needs of patients at the end of life. Patients should not be abandoned once it is determined that cure is impossible. Multidisciplinary interventions should be sought including specialty consultation, hospice care, pastoral support, family counseling, and other modalities. Patients near the end of life should continue to receive emotional support, good communication, comfort care and adequate pain control. Their autonomy should be respected.

Even when physicians use all the tools at hand to care for pain and suffering, a small number of patients still suffer. Each of these patients is unique; each one of the patients will challenge the caregiver's skills in the extreme; and each one's care should be highly individualized and decided in private amongst the patient, physician and family. The Vermont Medical Society recognizes that medical aid in dying, in the form of Vermont Act 39, is a legal option that could be made in the context of the physician-patient relationship. Recognizing that principled physicians disagree about the ethics of Act 39, the Vermont Medical Society is committed to protecting its members' freedom to decide whether to participate in medical aid in dying according to their own values and beliefs.

The Vermont Medical Society is actively engaged in promoting initiatives that assure all dying Vermonters receive good, comprehensive palliative care. These include ensuring that all members of the Society become educated in the goals and techniques of palliative care and that all members become adept at dealing with the dying patients' special needs.

This policy shall supersede any contradictory earlier policy.