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LÄKARFÖRBUNDET

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**Dealing with public and published opinions**

Finnish experience of public debate 2017


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**Background**


- Legislative proposal initiated by lay people on euthanasia was handed to the parliament 9.11.2016
- Huge public attention due to very well respected and known people acting behind the proposal – fourth in order
- Medical association was immediately one partner in the debate.
- It was about the only partner raising opposite views,



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**Lesson 1:**

- Every nation must deal with the issue its own way
- Finland is homogenic, small, open, democratic, secular, we have confidence to the 'system'....




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**Lesson 2:**

Support of the euthanasia among the public (in Finland) is 'natural' and big

- people 73%
- Physicians (2013) 46%
- nurses 42%
- Ready to do it 23%
- Specialists in end-of-life care 17% (!)




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**Lesson 3:**

Questions raised are implying that opposing euthanasia is inhuman

- Why do the physicians allow suffering?
- Suffering is understood as physical (pain) suffering and the other natural forms of suffering prior to death are not understood:
  - Social, psychological, existential
- Explaining that the suffering (pain) is treatable does not have any effect



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**Lesson 4:**

Autonomy of the patient is put forefront

- Why is a suffering person not entitled to his/her own opinion on the treatment?
- It is MY life and MY decision!
- Is the physician not willing to treat the patient according to his/her will?

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Lesson 5:

Media is on the side of the ill individual

- .... illustrating that the opposing profession is against the sick person which damages the trust to the profession and questions the trust to our ethics
- Social media is of huge importance and mainly pro-euthanasia

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Lesson 6:

Clarify terminology

- 'euthanasia' as a term is extremely poorly understood
- Therefore many people support it on wrong basis or expects solutions to problems it will not solve

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TS 7.2.2017

Is euthanasia the sought solution?

Upon arriving to terminal care institution they wanted 'euthanasia' and after receiving proper palliative care the husband confirmed that it was exactly what they ment with it



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Ilta-Sanomat  
18.12.2016

Is euthanasia the solution?

On the tabloids was given the image that 3 yrs old ICH boy could benefit of euthanasia legislation



**8-vuotiaan Einon lääkäri-isän puheenvuoro: "Olisin halunnut pojalleni eutanasian"**

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Do we understand the terminology?

SK 47/2016



**My personal experience makes me an expert; His son died suffering of immense pain Suffering = pain ex: social, mental and existential suffering**

Eikö oikea järjestys olisi laittaa ensin saattohoito kuntoon ja mahdollistaa avustettu itsemurha ennen kuin säädetään lakia eutanasiasta?  
**SEPPÄNEN:** Lopetetaan tämä kaksinaismoraali. Esimerkiksi minun poikani sai käytännössä eutanasian sedaation kautta. Siinä ihminen nukutetaan ikuisen uneen eikä hänelle anneta ruokaa eikä juomaa. Lopputulos on sama kuin eutanasiassa: kuolema.  
**PÄLVE:** Terminaalinen sedaatio on osa lääketiedettä. Se on hoitotoimenpide silloin, kun kuolema on välittömässä lähe-

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Lesson 6:

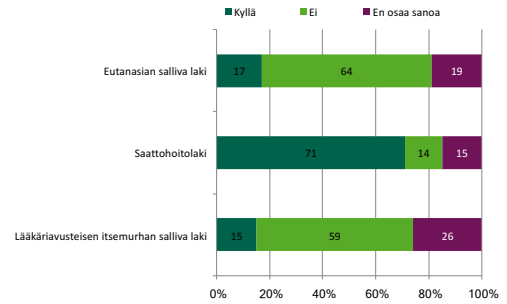
Try to clarify the intentions of any debate

- Clarify/inform concerning the terminology
- Clarify the different forms of suffering and the possibilities to measure them
  - Physical/existential/psychological/social
- Explain the difference between the possibilities to treat pain and the current situation in palliative care

### Lesson 7:

- Give the floor to the specialists of palliative care
- Endorse their visibility in the debate
- Inform about palliative sedation as being a treatment – not a form of euthanasia
- Only after that come the medical ethical issues important in the public debate

### Should we have law on euthanasia?



### Medical ethics standpoint

- Euthanasia fundamentally changes and to some degree also damages the trust to the health care system
- Unacceptable and invisible pressure on vulnerable patient groups
  - → new suffering
- Physicians are supposed to decide on the diagnosis and treatment – not on active termination of life (let the life end – do not end it)
- Slippery slope is a fact – and very undesirable
- Medical ethics is international



thank you