



World Right-to-Die Newsletter

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Schiavo Tragedy and Award-Winning Films Reawake Right-to-Die Interest

The death of the young Florida woman, after 15 years of being in a persistent vegetative state amid intense and continuous court battles, resulted in world-wide consideration about alternatives to a prolonged, difficult death. In addition, *The Sea Inside (Mar Adentro)* and *Million Dollar Baby*, award-winning films sympathetically dealing with the subject of two quadriplegics who wanted help to end their lives peacefully, provoked new interest in assisted dying. Steady work through legislatures and courts, plus tragic incidents of suicides and mercy killings, have created unusual activity in our movement in 2005.

Javier Barden playing Spanish quadriplegic Ramon Sampedro in *The Sea Inside*.



Australia Censorship Bill Fought



The Australian parliament is likely to pass a law banning information about suicide from being given on the internet, by phone—or publication and distribution of research—on new methods of self-deliverance. Clearly aimed at Dr. Philip Nitschke and his **Exit International** activities, the government will be able to tap Exit's phones, infiltrate and screen Exit's faxes and emails, and monitor Exit's website and listservs.

Attorney Ludwig Minelli, Director of **Dignitas** in Switzerland, argued that this legislation is in violation

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What was the Schiavo circus all about? Should we worry?

by Derek Humphry

At the height of the Terri Schiavo case I was asked to speak in New York city. I had intended to speak about voluntary euthanasia and assisted suicide, but the audience was only interested in the implications of the Schiavo case. What did it mean for them now? How would it affect their end of life? This was

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Terry Schiavo before 1990.

Australia: Censorship Bill Fought

of Article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of the UN; Australia is a signatory. Dr. Nitschke is considering a move to New Zealand if this passes.

Killing Me Softly—A New Approach from Down Under

Philp Nitschke and Dr. Fiona Stewart just released their new book, *Killing Me Softly: Voluntary Euthanasia and the Road to the Peaceful Pill* amid media and

public attention in Australia. It is the explanation for Dr. Nitschke's pursuit of methods people can use themselves though it is not a how-to book.

Dr Philip Nitschke
© Dr Fiona Stewart

**killing
me
softly**

Voluntary Euthanasia and the
Road to the Peaceful Pill

Their concerns include the way in which the medical profession has assumed 'ownership' of death, and the fact that existing laws restrict our end-of-life choices. They offer a future where a 'Peaceful Pill' could revolutionize euthanasia just as the contraceptive pill transformed birth control a generation ago.

It can be ordered from the **Exit International** web site (www.exitinternational.net).

Technologies Developed

Helium canisters have become available in Australia which can be used with a plastic bag for a peaceful and quick self-deliverance. This method has been used in the U.S. and Canada and is described in the third edition of *Final Exit* by Derek Humphry. Other methods being developed are the CoGenie, a carbon monoxide generator and a new Catalytic converter generator (the "CarGen").

France



Legal Change

A bill which would give terminally ill patients the right to demand an end to treatment, including artificial feeding, was passed in France. Passive euthanasia would thus be authorized; active euthanasia would remain illegal. Doctors will be able to switch off life-support machines "if these extend life artificially" without fear of prosecution.

For example, doctors would be able to prescribe painkillers even when this "might bring about death as a secondary effect"; a limit would be set on unreasonable persistence in continuing treatment; doctors would have a duty to respect the wishes of patients; a living will would apply even if a patient is unconscious but only if it was made within three years of implementation; otherwise the decision would rest with family plus medical teams.

Colombia

Interest in Living Wills Stimulated

The right to die with dignity, euthanasia and assisted suicide as means to achieve dignified death, have been subjects of intense public interest in Colombia, the only South American nation to have a **Right to Die with Dignity Society** (DMD—Colombia).

As a result of the Schiavo case and *Mar Andetro* plus the death of Pope John Paul II, interest was stirred in Living Wills. The result was audio and TV shows, meetings with the press, and phone calls from other Latin American countries. More than 500 people asked for DMD-Colombia Living Will ("Esta es mi Voluntad") and around 300 have already signed it, joining the 22,000 members of the society.



Germany

Surveys

In October/November 2003 **DGHS** carried out surveys on living wills and attitudes to doctors who carry out assisted dying. It seems that 53% of German citizens know about living wills, over 70% in the case of those over 60. 84% said they would not lose confidence in their doctor if s/he helped an incurably ill person to end their life; only 20% thought they would lose confidence in a doctor who provided active and direct assistance in the case of an incurably ill patient. Contrary to the established views of the medical profession, a majority of the population wants more scope for assisted dying and to see norms set out in law for active and direct assisted dying.



