



# World Right-to-Die Newsletter

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Winter 2008

## Paris World Conference: Huge Success



Jacqueline Herremans Past President, World Federation (Left) and Jean-Luc Romero President, ADMD-France (Right)

Thanks to the cooperation between ADMD-France and the World Federation of Right-to-Die Societies the 17th World Conference was informative, lively, and provided a venue for old friends to meet and new ones to be made. Various parts of the excellent programs are described briefly in this Newsletter though room does not permit a description of the entire meeting whose theme was Toward a Global Recognition

of our Final Freedom. Beginning October 30, the congress ended on Sunday, November 1 with the First International Day for the Right to Die with Dignity.

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## Washington State Becomes #2 in the U.S.



Former Governor Booth Gardner campaigns for I-1000

Ten years after the Oregon Death with Dignity Act went into effect – surviving all legal challenges – the voters of its neighboring state overwhelmingly passed I-1000 – the Washington Death with Dignity law. Essentially the same as the Oregon law it provides physician aid in dying –in the form of a prescription for a lethal medication– to mentally competent, terminal ill adult residents of Washington following a 15 day waiting period, two oral and one written request and a possible mental health examination. The initiative garnered 59% of the vote – more than Barack Obama received in that state. The law will go into effect in March, 2009, despite continuing strong opposition of the Catholic Church. Governor Gardner, who is suffering from advanced Parkinson's Disease, campaigned for the law although he may not be able to use it since Parkinson's is not considered terminal. Jurisdictions where medically assisted dying is legal now include Oregon, Washington, the Netherlands, Belgium, Switzerland and Luxembourg.

December 2008

## New WF President From Colombia



The new WF President is Juan Mendoza-Vega, a distinguished neurosurgeon from Colombia.

Dr. Mendoza-Vega gave the following inaugural address – delivered in Spanish, French and English:

“May I begin by expressing my gratitude to ADMD-France and its president Jean-Luc Romero, for the outstanding organization of this World Conference and for the idea of the International Day of the Right to Die in Dignity that will take place tomorrow for the very first time ever; your generosity and kindness will mark an outstanding point in the annals of the World Federation of Right to Die Societies and in the memory of every one of us.

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# Faces in the Crowd



Libby Drake  
(UK)



Aurora Bau Blasi  
(Spain)



Chris Docker  
(Scotland)



Bina Devon  
(Israel)



Linda Banez  
(USA)



Ron Plummer  
(Monaco)



Ludwig Minelli  
(Switzerland)



Laura Santos  
(Portugal)



Petra deJong  
(Netherlands)



Jane Rogers  
(Canada)



Bertit Hasselmark  
(Sweden)



Gunnar Hagberg  
(Sweden)

## Meet Your Board

This is your new WF Board which will serve until the 2010 meeting.

**Juan Mendoza-Vega is the President** and is also president of ADMD-Colombia (see page 1 for his picture.)



**Ted Goodwin, Vice President** is founder and president of the Final Exit Network, was Treasurer of the World Federation from 2006 and former member of the board of the Hemlock Society USA.



**Hugh Wynne, Secretary** is a past president of the World Federation and a member of the board of FATE.



**Ans Boors** is a board member of NVVE.



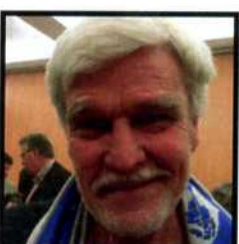
**Michael Irwin, Treasurer** is a past president of the World Federation and a member of the board of FATE and past president of Dignity in Dying.



**Faye Girsh, Newsletter Editor** has been editor for four years, is a senior advisor to the Final Exit Network, board member of ERGO, president of the Hemlock Society of San Diego.



**Aycke Smook** is a past president of the World Federation, board member of ERGO, and past board member of NVVE.



**Rodney Syme** is past president of the Voluntary Euthasia Society of Victoria (Australia) and author of *A Good Death*.



**Cynthia St. John** is past secretary of the WF board, past board member of Death with Dignity-Canada.



# NVVE Proposal to Unite and Professionalize World Federation



Rob Jonquiere, Past Executive Director, NVVE Netherlands

Rob Jonquiere presented to the WF Delegates and Board a proposal that is designed to strengthen and unify the World Federation. NVVE has agreed to increase its already large contribution to the WF by paying half a Euro per member in annual dues. This sum of \$50,000US would enable the organization to have a professional director and small staff. That person would be Dr. Jonquiere, who is recently retired after many years as CEO of NVVE – one of the most progressive RTD organizations in the world and the second largest with more than 100,000 members.

The proposal will be considered by the WF Board as Dr. Jonquiere furnishes more details in the coming months. It will be more thoroughly discussed at the Fall 2009 meeting of Europe RTD. Its success depends on the willingness of other member organizations to make a contribution, per member, similar to that of NVVE. Several organizations have already committed their resources in the interest of perpetuating and strengthening the World Federation.

## Dutch Developments

Rob Jonquiere, M.D.

Since we adopted our Euthanasia Law in 2002 it looked as if debates in the Netherlands had died a dignified death. In a way, that is what usually happens when laws are being put in force: opponents take their losses and keep on the lookout for undesired activities on the fringes of such a new law; supporters count their blessings and keep quiet, afraid of reopening a debate that could endanger the gain. That is possibly the reason why the move of NVVE, changing objectives and name, towards a broader goal than euthanasia alone was not much noticed until lately. In a policy document called Perspectives on Dignified Dying NVVE makes explicit what plans will be developed to have better care for End of Life situations. These plans contain more than Euthanasia alone; humane dignified dying should become available in every well considered choice made by someone. The choices include assisted dying by non-medical professionals, refraining from food and hydration, palliative sedation, and whatever other choices will be available in the future.

# ADMD Presents Exciting Program in Paris

Translated simultaneously into several languages from French a day long panel, presented a compelling variety of viewpoints moderated by ADMD President, Jean-Luc



Regine Salvat

and Morton Jensen. Moving stories of pain and anxiety were told by Regine Salvat and Clara Blanc.

Romero. Speakers included Laurent Fabius, former prime minister and member of the French Parliament. Another MP was Henriette Martinez both of whom supported legislation for Voluntary Euthanasia. Two doctors who had been charged with illegal behavior were represented – Dr. Frédéric Chaussoy

In the second session we heard from representatives of three countries which have legalized assistance in dying: Jacqueline Herremans, President of ADMD-Belgium (and of the WF), Dr. Jerome Sobel, President of EXIT- Suisse, and Jean Huss, member of the Luxembourg parliament. Jean Huss, Member of Parliament, Luxembourg Jerome Sobel, MD, President of EXIT-Suisse, Switzerland and Dr. Gustavo Alfonso Quintana, a courageous doctor in Colombia who has provided euthanasia for many patients, suggested new verbage for the movement.

Francine Lalonde, MP from Quebec (Canada) talked about support for an assisted dying bill in her highly Catholic district. Jacob Kohnstamm, former minister in the Netherlands parliament and former WF president, and attorney Eugene Suturious both discussed where the law in the Netherlands should go next including older people tired of life.



Francine Lalonde

## OTHER SPEAKERS IN THE ADMD PROGRAM

Elke Baezner President, Right to Die Europe  
Dr. Eugene Suturious, NVVE  
Lesley Martin, Dignity New Zealand Trust  
Dr. Gustavo Alfonso Quintana, ADMD-Colombia  
Francine Lalond, Member of Parliament, Quebec, Canada  
Jacob Kohnstamm, NVVE  
Jean Huss, Member of Luxembourg Parliament



## Mendoza-Vega

Taking office as the President of a World Federation formed by more than forty societies in almost thirty nations of the four continents, is not an ordinary occurrence. For me, a Latin American physician, it is certainly an honour and a big challenge.

I am convinced that the “dignity in dying” movement needs a World Federation, a strong organization able to coordinate national and regional efforts in search of the recognition and widespread respect of that fundamental human right, the right to arrive to the end of our life in full control of ourselves, with the same dignity we deserve and demand for human life as a whole.

From now on, I will not be the owner or the master of this World Federation, but I will act my best as a skipper at the wheel of a big ship in troubled waters; an outstanding body of collaborators will be with me, the members of the Board of Directors you have elected, and the members of the advisors committee, like Sidney Rosoff; to all of them, Ted Goodwin, Michael Irwin, Hugh Wynn, Jacqueline Herremans as past-president, Faye Girsh, Anns Baars, Ayke Smook, Cynthia Saint John, Rodney Syme, I want to thank you in advance (see Board pictures, page 2).

A special mention must be made to those Board members that will not continue, Michio Arakawa, from Japan, Karen Sanders, from the United Kingdom, Chris Loker, from the United States and Jacob Kohnstamm, from the Netherlands; all of them have rendered long and important services to the World Federation and to the cause of dignity in dying and will be fondly remembered. Besides, I am sure we will meet them in our coming events.

Now, let us pass to some concrete issues:

First of all, the time and venue of the next world conference is still open. As our bylaws provide we will convene in two years time -- around October 2010. I need to hear candidacies and proposals, as soon as possible.

The Board needs to have frequent communications with all member societies; e-mail and internet allow such contact with minimal effort; please use it and answer our messages.

The point of looking for recognition at the European Union and the United Nations Organization will be brought to the consideration of the Board once again, and actions will be taken as it seems appropriate.

Special attention and efforts will be given by me to Latin American countries, to stimulate the forming of national societies for the right to die, and to collaborate with their first steps. Any of you who have contacts there, or can offer ideas or advice on this matter, please do so at your convenience.

You have made me your president, have me now as your friend. Thanks.”

## NuTech Conducts Workshop in Paris

Though not officially part of the WF Conference the NuTech Group met on Nov.1 chaired by Faye Girsh and Derek Humphry and sponsored by ERGO, a WF member organization. To defray costs a fee of \$20 US was charged.



Derek Humphry

NuTech, founded to seek better methods for a peaceful death, deviated in its program this time with a variety of speakers who have been pioneers in the RTD but using a variety of organizational and methodological approaches (For more information on NuTech see the New Books section, page 7, *In Search of a Gentle Death*).

Russel Ogden, a long-time Canadian academic researcher on methods of self-chosen death, led off with a review of the helium method and included his own observations of two helium deaths. He concludes that a less than 6% oxygen environment, as one obtains by breathing helium in an enclosed space



Russel Ogden

like a plastic bag, results in a rapid and painless loss of consciousness followed by about a minute of accelerated breathing. Death occurs within a few minutes thereafter. He does note that an experienced person should be on hand. Ogden will be elaborating on these results in a paper to be published in 2009.

Rodney Syme, a urologist from Melbourne Australia talked about his 34 year struggle to help his patients achieve a peaceful death even though the law is ambiguous about what is palliative care and what constitutes a crime. He has described this evolution in his new book *A Good Death* (see the New Books section, page 7). He concludes that there is a “benign conspiracy” among the police, coroner and prosecutors to leave doctors alone who provide help. He says that good palliative treatment includes providing a good death.



Nan Maitland

Libby Wilson and Nan Maitland described their Scotland-based organization, FATE (Friends at the End) and how it deals with numerous inquiries. They screen and prepare patients to apply for an assisted death with Dignitas in Switzerland; they also try to help those who do not meet the qualifications.

