

Christian Action Ministry Newsletter

Involving the Christian in Community Action

May-June, 2003 ☆ Vol. 13, Number 3

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Verichip's Maker's Woes Continue

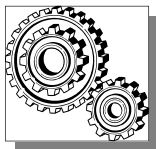
The company making the implantable ID chip is having some legal difficulties.

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An update on bills of interest and an exhortation to become involved.

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In the Works

Town Caucuses

Are you interested in becoming involved? CAM is looking for interested and active people to act as liaisons to their church, helping to keep the Christian community informed. Contact CAM at 288-9173.

Part II A Critique of the Proposed

“Vermont Death with Dignity Act”

By
Robert d. Orr, MD.CM

This is the second article in a series on Physician Assisted Suicide. The first article is available on our website, www.christianactionministry.com

Euthanasia and Physician-Assisted Suicide in The Netherlands

- Both euthanasia and physician assisted suicide were approved by the Royal Dutch Medical Association in 1984 and all prosecutors in the country agreed to not prosecute a physician if he or she followed the strict RDMA guidelines which included recording the actual cause of death. The practice was later legalized.
- Many such deaths are not reported: During the first few years, death certificates showed that between 180 and 450 people died in this fashion each year. Government investigations in 1990 and 1995 showed the actual numbers to be 3,735 (1990) and 4,710 (1995).



- Physicians did not follow the guidelines:
- in 17% of cases, patients refused palliative care, i.e. it was not a "last resort" as required by law

- (intolerable suffering which cannot be relieved)
- in 50% of cases, the required second opinion about prognosis was not requested
- Most disturbing, in 25% of cases (over 1,000 deaths each year), there was no request for aid in dying from the patient.
- The ultimate decision is a matter of physician autonomy, not patient autonomy: Only 1 in 3 patient

- requests for death is honored by the physician.
- The public discussion and actual practice has been expanded to include teenagers, handicapped infants, patients who are chronically depressed but not terminally ill
 - A documentary made by US proponents of physician-assisted suicide clearly shows evidence of family coercion in an ambivalent patient.
 - The first report of complications in the administration of physician-assisted suicide and euthanasia appeared in 2000. It revealed that assisted suicide fails 14% of the time; Dutch physicians follow up failed assisted suicide with a lethal injection 18% of the time. The nearly 20-year Dutch experiment has failed. We have learned from their experience:
 - the "slippery slope" is real and operative, i.e. qualifying reasons have expanded
 - guidelines have failed

“Moral certitude gives the prior assurance of right sentiment”
Richard Weaver 1948

(Continued from page 1)

- physicians fail to report their actions more often than not
- death without consent is common.

Physician-Assisted Suicide in Oregon

- Physician-assisted suicide, but not euthanasia, was legalized by referendum in Oregon in 1994 and was implemented, after legal challenges, in November 1997. The provisions of the Vermont bill are very similar to the Oregon law.
- Initial reports from the Oregon Division of Health (ODH) state that 70 individuals died in the first 3 years.
- The lethal prescriptions for about 2/3 of those who died were written, not by their own physician, but by a physician who did not know the patient and had been supplied by Compassion in Dying or the Hemlock Society, the two major proponents.
- The ODH has reported limited data, focusing more on patient and physician confidentiality rather than on compliance with the law; their data does show:
 - the primary physician of 24 of the first 42 patients to die under this law (58%) declined the patient's request
 - the reason for most of the

requests were personal, psychological, and social, rather than uncontrolled pain or other symptoms.

- mental health consultation was obtained in less than 30% of cases, but all of these went on to successful suicide, so it must be assumed there was no evidence of depression or the consultant chosen was supportive of assisted suicide.
- Over and above the limited official data, newspaper investigations have reported:
 - "doctor shopping" after 2 or more physicians felt the patient did not qualify
 - family pressure on an ambivalent patient
 - a decision by an HMO administrator (MD) to authorize a lethal prescription for a patient in his plan after 2 of his own physicians had felt the patient did not qualify
 - mental health consultation may be done to protect the physician rather than the patient; one physician admitted to requesting psychological consultation "to cover my ass. I didn't want there to be any problems."
 - family assistance in achieving death for a patient who was unable to take the medication
 - Compassion in Dying has likewise been secretive about most cases, but will-

Verichip's Maker's Woes Continue

Update by
Mark Flemming

Applied Digital Solutions (ADS), the majority owner of the Digital Angel Corporation and maker of an implantable ID chip called Verichip, has recently had several missteps. It failed to make a loan payment of approximately \$46.2 million against a \$95 million loan on March 6, 2003 to IBM Credit LLC. ADS then filed a highly controversial suit against IBM Credit LLC and IBM Corp. for allegedly trying to obtain the control of the rights to the product. IBM eventually agreed to forgive the loan entirely if ADS pays \$30 million on or before June 30, 2003 or \$50 million on or before December 31, 2003. Following this offer, ADS dropped the lawsuit against IBM. In the meantime, ADS has become the subject of an informal inquiry by the Securities and Exchange Commission's Southeast Regional Office. ADS is currently unable to make a statement whether this inquiry will have potentially adverse effects. The chairman and chief executive officer of ADS, Richard Sullivan, decided to retire after renegotiating the new loan terms with IBM. His severance package includes a payment of restricted stock valued at \$10.6 million after negotiations brought it down from original obligations of \$17 million.

Mark Flemming is President of the Christian Action Ministry and attends Essex Alliance Church

ing to talk openly about those it feels went well.

- The lethal prescription used most commonly (9 grams of barbiturate) is the same as is used for assisted suicide in the Netherlands.

Abuses and failure to follow regulations were not evident in the Netherlands until government surveys were undertaken several years after introduction. If such blatant abuses are made by medical professionals in the use of lethal injection, it seems intuitive that abuses will be even more common when the professional's involvement is easier, i.e., the writing of a prescription.

Instead of legalizing physician-assisted suicide, the medical profession and the state of Vermont should increasingly emphasize the provision of excellent end-of-life care aimed at eliminating the reasons offered by persons who make such a request.

Dr. Robert Orr, MD is a Clinical Ethicist and attends Trinity Episcopal Church in Shelburne



“Though a good many semi-sophisticated persons espouse cultural relativism in the abstract, very few are willing to accept its logical consequences—to agree, for instance, that cannibalism is only a matter of taste, that Auschwitz reflects an alternative approach to race relations, that infanticide is a somewhat archaic but nonetheless effective mode of family planning, that slavery is an alternative view about how to get a society’s work done.”

Jeane J. Kirkpatrick 1979

What's new in the 2003-4 Legislature of interest to Christians?

By
Bob Garvey

Although the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the Senate President Pro-tem can make exceptions, there will be no more bills introduced this year in either body of the Legislature.

In a previous article we mentioned several bills that were worthy of readers' attention. A check of the Legislative Bill Tracking System revealed that since CAM's last newsletter, there has been no activity in the House Committees to which the following bills were assigned by Speaker of the House, Walter Freed:

- H.0007, Child Pornography, in House Judiciary Committee;
- H.0059 Partial Birth Abortions, In House Health & Welfare Committee; --
- H.0098--The Vermont Health Care Plan, HH&WC;
- H0132—Consensual sex between teenagers, in House Judiciary Committee;
- H0136—Requires Parental Notification prior to performing an abortion on an unemancipated minor, HH& WC;

- H.0113 –Harassment in Schools, House Education Committee (includes both RACIAL and SEXUAL harassment)

Note: Copies of any of the mentioned bills may be obtained on line by accessing the "Vermont Legislative Bill Tracking System", by either Bill number, Subject matter or Sponsor(s). For those without Internet access, call or write to the Vermont Legislative Council and request a copy of the bill and the current status of the bill. You may ask for as many bills as you have an interest in reviewing.

Following are some comments about one of the above bills.

H0132 proposed to lessen the penalties for two teenagers who have consensual sex before either reach the age of 18. It stemmed from a request by a constituent of one of the eventual sponsors of the bill. The request was prompted by an actual case where a teenage boy and girl had consensual sex. Eventually the parents of the girl brought a legal action against the boy and he was required to go on the sex offender register, continually report on his whereabouts, and is apparently saddled with that

requirement for an indefinite time. The bill's language created other problems and it is now being re-drafted. Everyone reading this should obtain the Revised Version, read it and then contact their legislator and find out where they stand on the "revised" bill. Have them explain the bill to you so you are sure they understand it before they vote. If you don't know who your Representative is, call you town or city clerk and ask them for both a name, address, phone number, fax number, or e-mail address.

In the "Last, but not least" department, it is not too early to be thinking about someone you believe has strong moral values and common sense, who would make a good candidate to run for either your own District Representative or County Senator in the next election, particularly if the one you have does not adhere to Christian values. If you don't know whether they do or don't, you have a perfect right to ask them point blank, where they stand on any bill that comes before them. Likewise, if you have not been politically active in the past, this is the year to make a change and go to the political caucus of the party of your choice. Ask someone in that party to show you their

party platform and decide for yourself if they represent your views. Issues such as partial birth abortion, assisted suicide (Death with Dignity bill), parental notification, child pornography, consensual sex between minors, or extreme rights for homosexuals under the guise of "harassment" or "indoctrination" into the homosexual life styles for public school children, are just a small window of the myriad bills that come before the Legislature each year. Christians must be vigilant and discerning concerning good and evil, and ready to actively participate in the political process to effect change. We live in a democratic republic, and here in Vermont have no voice other than through our elected Representatives. We must assume responsibility for candidates who we, and those we know, elect to public office.

Attend your own Political Party Caucus when they meet in September so you, and your friends and relatives who believe as you do, can have a "voice" in who will represent **you** in the next election.

Bob Garvey is a Board Member of the Christian Action Ministry and attends St. Mark's Catholic Church

"Mankind's moral sense is not a strong beacon light, radiating outward to illuminate in sharp contrast all that it touches. It is, rather, a small candle flame, casting vague and multiple shadows, flickering and sputtering in the strong winds of power and passion, greed and ideology. But brought close to the heart and cupped in one's hands, it dispels the darkness and warms the soul." James Q. Wilson 1993

What can I do ?



Faith without works is dead James 2:17

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By the time you are reading this the legislative session will either have ended or will be very close to doing so. With summer upon us, it is hard to think about bills and issues that confront us, yet much is done in committee work during the summer that can impact you. Stay informed! CAM will continue to follow the issues as they develop and provide you with relevant information.

Have a great summer!

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Next Meetings May 5, 7:00 pm Essex. Alliance Church Essex, Vt. June 2, 7:00 pm Community Bible Church So. Burlington, Vt.

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