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Newsletter, September 2024

Dear members,

I would like to inform you about events since the Annual Report of the General Assembly of June 24.

The headlines about the first FTB in 'Sarco' by the Australian doctor Philipp Nitschke were the most controversial in summer 24. In favour of a dignified and peaceful death, we clearly distance ourselves from the use of any method other than the well-known drug sodium pentobarbital (NaP). I was working for Dignitas Association when four people were accompanied to their deaths with Helium-Gas. It was an unacceptable death for the people concerned and a traumatic experience for their family members, because convulsions occurred. I fear something similar with the use of 'Sarco'. The drug NaP, which has been used in Switzerland for forty years, is the safest method of guaranteeing a truly peaceful death for those suffering. I don't see why we need experiments when we have very good experience with a drug. The Life-End Association will continue to work with the best drug as before. I also fear that the opponents of AVD could position themselves more strongly if the first AVD in 'Sarco' were to take place. It is astonishing that neither Swissmedic nor the FMH or the Swiss medical profession feel responsible for preventing this abuse of the liberal law. Let's hope that everything turns out well.

What I find difficult is the obvious discrepancy between liberal Swiss law and the impossibility of actually being able to exercise the right of AVD. There is still a lot of work to be done in Switzerland. I currently have a situation in five different hospitals in the Basel area where hospital patients have asked their doctors treating them in the hospital, to issue them with a report on their capacity for judgement and a prescription for the medication NaP. The treating doctors promised the patients that they would do this, as they could understand their patient's wish to die. However, they all had to back out, as the hospital management forbade anyone to 'participate' in any way if there was a wish for AVD. It should be noted that these hospitals are not private clinics, but public hospitals. They are financed by all of us and should actually respect the patient's wishes, the wishes of all of us, all the more. Which head physician has the right to forbid his employees to respect the wishes of patients? I think it is now time to take legal action against these hospitals. I also see this as the task of the lifecircle association, because our members in particular, but also all other suffering people, must have the right to make real use of the AVD if they need it.

The situation is better in nursing homes in Switzerland. Most nursing homes allow an AVD to be carried out in the resident's room. However, there is still a clear difference in the way Swiss nursing homes deal with the wish to die. A few days ago, for example, I had an AVD in a care home that we had to carry out at 6am or after 6pm. We had to wake up the seriously ill, very elderly lady before 6 a.m. because she didn't want to wait all day for her last evening, which she was longing for so much. She fell asleep infinitely happily after opening her infusion with the overdosed anaesthetic NaP without the slightest hesitation. All people should be allowed to die so peacefully,

I continue to receive desperate emails and phone calls from people who cannot commit suicide in Switzerland because they do not belong to an assisted suicide organisation. The largest organisation, Exit, has imposed a waiting period of 90 days for new members. But death and difficult dying do not wait for 90 days. Especially not at the moment when the doctors say that there is nothing more they can do for the patient, that the patient must prepare for death. Exit does provide the option for non-member-patients to submit an 'urgent request', which is then treated as an emergency depending on the illness. But these 'urgent requests' are becoming more and more numerous, and Exit cannot accept them all. I then try to help by supporting and training the attending physician to carry out the AVD himself for his patient. Under Swiss law, patients are not dependent on organisations. Every Swiss doctor is allowed to carry out an AVD for a patient who is capable of judgement without an organisation. In my opinion, the path with fewer organisations but more doctors who have the confidence to conduct an AVD is the right one. However, it will take a long time before this becomes a reality.

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I would like to remind you of some information from the annual report: the lifecircle association will once again be organising a panel event on 2 October this year, this time entitled: “Dying peacefully at home - a wish that many people do not fulfil. How can this be changed? Finding the way between palliative medicine, starvation until death, and assisted voluntary death”. We have been able to engage the renowned doctor and specialist in end-of-life fasting, Dr Albert Wettstein, and the highly experienced palliative care specialist Verena Gantenbein for the panel. It will take place at 18.00 in the Hotel Hofmatt in Münchenstein. Guests who are not members of lifecircle are also cordially invited. You can find the invitation on our website [https://www.lifecircle.ch/veranstaltungen/?no\\_cache=1](https://www.lifecircle.ch/veranstaltungen/?no_cache=1) and here in the attachment.

I would like to invite you once again to visit our “Café Goodbye”, which takes place every three months on a Sunday morning at 10 a.m. in the Reinach BL local history museum. On 17 November, I will be giving a talk in person on the unfortunately always topical subject of “living with loneliness”. You can find information on all upcoming topics on the website: <https://www.cafegoodbye.ch/> .

If you don't live too far from Basel, you also have the opportunity to experience an interesting evening organised by the Catholic Women's Association of Basel with the theme: “I want to understand dying as part of my life”. I will be giving a short talk on self-determination at the end of life and how to deal with dying. This will also be followed by a lively round of questions and discussion on the topic. This non-denominational event will take place on Thursday, 14 November 24 at 19.00 in the Begegnungszentrum at Nonnenweg 21 in Basel. Men are welcome!

I am currently in Ireland, as the congress of the worldwide euthanasia organisations <https://wfrtds.org> will take place in Dublin at the end of September. More and more countries are legalising AVD, and the exchange of information between them worldwide is extremely important and interesting. If anyone would like to join us virtually on our trip to Ireland, you can read a travel report from me from time to time on WhatsApp under ‘News’, +41 76 522 92 58.

I would also like to remind you once again that our association owns hand wheelchairs, two electric wheelchairs and various other aids and can give them to members.

Now I wish you all good days and wonderful experiences, even if life is sometimes difficult

Erika Preisig,

Family Doctor and President  
of the lifecircle association