
Newsletter March 2025

Dear members

Spring is fast approaching, nature is awakening with the first flowers, and soon the first leaves will emerge from the buds. I love this time when life begins. Time and again, we have members who are in good hands in the lifecircle association and who, thanks to the open 'emergency exit' of the FTB, may carry their suffering even longer. Often 'this last spring', then maybe even the summer. But some very old people with many illnesses that make them very frail ask us for an appointment for an AS in autumn, 'when the leaves fall'. They don't want to have to endure another winter, the cold and the icy season are not good for them.

I do admire these determined members with such a strong character, who ask for an appointment for an AVD in spring for the autumn and then carry out this conscious farewell in an incredibly straightforward and confident manner with gratitude for having had the chance to live on this earth. Such a rational decision takes a lot of courage, and I hope that one day I myself will have the courage to find the right time for me to say goodbye to this life in gratitude for my time on earth. A quote from Friedrich Nietzsche in 1883 in his Zarathustra: *"Many die too late, and some die too early. The doctrine 'die at the right time' still sounds strange"*. And this was written 150 years ago!

And we are still fighting worldwide, and also in Switzerland, for access to a self-determined end of life. There is still a lot of resistance, and the criminalisation of assisted suicide in Switzerland makes me ashamed and angry. Time and again, I have seen individual hospital doctors who are prepared to issue a medical report on their patients' capacity and a prescription for the means of dying, only to be forbidden to do so by the hospital management. Exit, the largest association for euthanasia in Switzerland, has now launched a petition demanding that assisted suicide should not only be authorised by law in all nursing homes, but also in all hospitals, hospices and private clinics. Unfortunately, this has only been launched in the canton of Zurich. I would like to see such a provision at federal level, not just at cantonal level. Unfortunately, however, once again too much is being demanded. If hospitals and hospices are forced to authorise AVD at their institutions, the opponents will do everything they can to prevent this. My demand:

all hospitals would have to train their doctors in assessing capacity and issuing a prescription so that doctors who are prepared to respect a death wish can and may issue the necessary documents without the AS having to take place at the hospital. This would not arouse as much resistance among opponents as the requirement that the AS must be authorised at the hospital. Well, there should be a referendum on this in the canton of Zurich this year, we'll see what the people of Zurich decide.

Whether another panel discussion will take place this autumn depends on whether I can get help with the organisation. Unfortunately, our Board member Annelies Herzog passed away late last autumn. Annelies helped me enormously in preparing the last panel event. In addition, another member of the Board has fallen ill and is no longer able to support the organisation to the same extent as before. As you can see, fate stops at nothing. We are urgently looking for at least one new Board member, as the Vice-Presidency is also vacant. If anyone, even someone who is not a

member, feels called upon to support me in planning a lifecircle panel event, I would be grateful for any feedback. A non-member would then have the right to be accepted as a member by way of exception.

I particularly invite our members in England to read the attachment to this newsletter. Our member Patricia McKenna patmckenna293@gmail.com is campaigning in England for access to the FTB and is looking for support.

Our Annual General Meeting will again take place in June, on Wednesday 25 June 2025, and you will receive an invitation and agenda in May. Please give some thought now to whether you would be willing to support the lifecircle association on the board. As a rule, we hold two meetings a year, and help with the organisation of the annual panel discussion would also be very welcome.

I would again like to invite you to visit our 'Café Goodbye', which takes place every three months on a Sunday morning at 10 a.m. in the Reinach BL Museum of Local History. You will find information on all upcoming topics on the website: <https://www.cafegoodbye.ch/> .

Our wheelchairs have now found their way to Ukraine. The hospitals that have received them are extremely grateful, as this terrible war continues. How nice we have it in Switzerland!

Three of my patients, who I continue to care for with home visits despite giving up my practice, turned 101 last year. Now the man, who had to live in a home due to advanced dementia, was allowed to die a few days ago. The two ladies continue to live in their home with Spitex assistance. How wonderful to remain mentally and physically 'functional' for so long that you can continue to live at home. Here, too, I have to express my admiration for how bravely people cope with their difficult old age. I'm not so sure I would want to grow old like that myself. One thing is important: every person should be allowed to decide for themselves how long they want to live and under what circumstances. As I keep telling journalists: none of the three ways is better than the other: Fasting to death, palliative care, assisted suicide, they can all be ways of saying goodbye with dignity. The important thing is that the patient's free will is respected.



Erika Preisig,
General Practitioner and President
of the lifecircle association