

April 20, 2016

The SRNA is seeking clarification of the role of RNs* in medical assistance in dying, and will provide updates as new information is available.

First Reading of Bill C-14

On April 14, 2016, [Bill C-14](#) was introduced in the House of Commons to amend the *Criminal Code* in relation to medical assistance in dying. Prior to coming into force and effect, the enactment will need to be debated and passed by the House of Commons. The Supreme Court of Canada has given the Federal Government until June 6, 2016 to have legislation in place.

The proposed changes “create exemptions from the offences of culpable homicide and of administering a noxious thing, in order to permit medical practitioners and nurse practitioners to provide medical assistance in dying” and also includes exemptions which “permit pharmacists and other persons to assist in the process” (House of Commons of Canada, 2016, April 14, p. ii). Bill C-14 specifically defines the conditions and criteria for provision of medical assistance in dying including who is eligible, and the safeguards that are proposed.

As Bill C-14 is not yet in effect, people seeking medical assistance in dying need to apply to the Court for individual authorization. See [SRNA Update on Physician-Assisted Death, April 4, 2016](#) for current RN practice recommendations.

RN(NP)s and RNs in Bill C-14

Exemptions in Bill C-14 state that “no medical practitioner or nurse practitioner commits culpable homicide” and “no person is a party to culpable homicide if they do anything for the purpose of aiding a medical practitioner or nurse practitioner if they provide a person with medical assistance in dying in accordance with section 241.2” (House of Commons of Canada, 2016, April 14, p. 2). Additionally, Bill C-14 provides exemptions for the “pharmacist who dispenses a substance” and the person aiding the patient to “self-administer a substance ... as part of the provision of medical assistance in dying in accordance with section 241.2” (House of Commons of Canada, 2016, April 14, p. 4).

It is noteworthy that the registered nurse is not named specifically in Bill C-14. RNs are advised to read Bill C-14 to consider the implications for nursing practice. There are many elements for consideration, such as the eligibility criteria and the definitions of competent adult persons and grievous and irremediable medical conditions. Independence of the medical and nurse practitioners is clearly outlined in Bill C-14, as well as the independent witnesses who, among other things cannot be “directly involved in providing health care services to the person making the request” (House of Commons of Canada, 2016, April 14, p.7).

Providing Feedback for RN Practice

The SRNA will be collaborating with representatives of the Ministry of Health, other regulatory bodies and employers as well as SRNA members and members of the public to establish a process for Medical Assistance in Dying in Saskatchewan.

To inform this work, the SRNA will be providing a number of opportunities to share your perspective. There will be focus group sessions, surveys and webinars to gather information and inform the collaborative work in preparation for the changes in legislation and resulting practice. Information about these opportunities will be provided to the SRNA membership via email and on the website. Feedback on medical assistance in dying can also be provided at any time to an SRNA Practice Advisor @ 1-800-667-9945 ext. 200 or practiceadvice@srna.org.

References

- House of Commons of Canada. (2016, April 14). *Bill C-14: An act to amend the Criminal Code and to make related amendments to other Acts (medical assistance in dying)*. Journals of the Senate of Canada, 1st session, 42nd Parliament, 64-65 Elizabeth II 2015-2016. Retrieved from <https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/2803276-C-14-Medical-assistance-in-dying.html>
- Saskatchewan Registered Nurses' Association. (2016, April 4). *SRNA Update on Physician-Assisted Death*. Retrieved from http://www.srna.org/images/stories/front_page/SRNA_Update_on_Physician_Assisted_Death_2016_04_08.pdf

*Throughout this document, RN represents registered nurse and RN(NP) [registered nurse (nurse practitioner)].