

The SRNA is continuing to determine of the role of RNs and RN(NP)s in medical assistance in dying, and will provide updates as new information is available.

June 6, 2016 officially marks the beginning of a new era for medical assistance in dying in Canada, as this is the day the Supreme Court gave the Federal Government to have legislation in place, however, this has not occurred. Despite Bill C-14 being introduced, studied and debated, it was not passed by the Senate and no legislation currently exists to specify the exemptions from criminal offense for the provision of medical assistance in dying in Canada. Patients may however request medically-assisted dying from a physician under the *Carter* decision of the Supreme Court and the applicable policy of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Saskatchewan.

The Absence of Legislation

It is not absolutely clear that the principles in the *Carter* decision provide protection from prosecution for health professionals who are not physicians and who assist physicians to provide medical assistance in dying. As such, the SRNA advises that:

- Members refrain from being involved in any type of activity that could be seen as assisting or counselling in medical assistance in dying
- If involvement is requested, members are advised to call the SRNA as soon as possible for practice support (1-800-667-9945 ext. 200 or email practiceadvice@srna.org)
- Members may refer to the [Canadian Nurses Protective Society](#) for personal liability support (1-800-267-3390)

The Future of Medical Assistance in Dying in Canada

While it is impossible to predict what future legislation will entail, the SRNA anticipates the evolution of medical assistance in dying over time. The SRNA will continue to work in collaboration with the provincial Ministry of Health, national bodies, jurisdictional counterparts and involved stakeholders to ensure a collaborative and consistent approach to medical assistance in dying. The SRNA is also committed to understanding the impact of medical assistance in dying more broadly within the context of end of life care. SRNA updates will continue to be provided to ensure effective communication. Also, the Canadian Nurses Protective Society (CNPS) has provided a resource, [Medical Assistance in Dying: What every nurse should know](#), which may be helpful.

Related Links

- [Canadian Nurses Protective Society](#)
- [College of Physicians and Surgeons of Saskatchewan](#)
- [Criminal Code \(Carter Decision\)](#)
- [Medical Assistance in Dying Update from the Government of Saskatchewan](#)
- [SRNA Updates on Medical Assistance in Dying](#)

SRNA Key Points: June 6, 2016 – Medical Assistance in Dying

- 1) Legislation is not in place for Medical Assistance in Dying in Canada. Patients may however request medically-assisted dying from a physician under the *Carter* decision of the Supreme Court and the applicable policy of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Saskatchewan.
- 2) While physicians are named in the *Carter* decision, it is not clear if RNs, RN(NP)s and other health professionals are protected from criminal prosecution within this decision.
- 3) In the absence of legislation, RNs and RN(NP)s are advised to refrain from being involved in any type of activity that could be seen as assisting or counselling in medical assistance in dying.
- 4) The SRNA will continue to seek clarification regarding RN and RN(NP) involvement in medical assistance in dying, and will post updates as information is available. The SRNA is working with the Ministry of Health and various stakeholders to ensure a collaborative and consistent approach. Questions should be directed to an SRNA Practice Advisor at practiceadvice@srna.org.