



APA ANNUAL CONVENTION
August 3-6, 2017 | Washington, D.C.

A Summary of APA's Efforts in the End-of-Life Arena

James L. Werth, Jr., Ph.D., ABPP
Stone Mountain Health Services



Early Efforts

- Over time, APA had been involved in discussing end-of-life issues and supporting hospice care
- The U.S. Supreme Court announced it would hear two cases related to physician-assisted death in 1995 (*Vacco v. Quill* and *Washington v. Glucksberg*)
- Psychologists were involved in developing an *amicus curiae* brief on mental health issues for the cases and asked APA to be a co-signer
- APA refused, in part because the organization had not issued any official statements on the topic of end-of-life issues or decision-making

APA's Activities

- Early work started in 1997 and resulted in a public statement
 - Prior to Supreme Court rulings, in April of 1997, the APA Public Communications Office / Public Interest Directorate, established a working group
 - Purpose was to create a briefing paper on mental health issues involved in physician-assisted dying and other end-of-life decisions that could be used to inform news media
 - The paper was converted into a public brochure entitled "Terminal Illness and Hastened Death Requests: The Important Role of the Mental Health Professional"
 - Later published as a journal article in *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice* (Farberman, 1997).

- February 1998, the APA Board of Directors authorized the formation of the Working Group on Assisted Suicide and End-of-Life Decisions (Working Group) and charged it with the following tasks:
 1. Examine the role of psychology in end-of-life decisions and quality of care issues;
 2. Address the invisibility of psychology around the issue of end-of-life decisions and recommend methods to increase the visibility of psychology and the role of psychologists in this arena;
 3. Consider and make recommendations on whether it might be appropriate for APA to take a position on the issue of assisted suicide and end-of-life decisions.

- 6 member Working Group met several times from 1998-2000 and developed 3 products
 - The Report to the Board of Directors of the American Psychological Association from the Working Group on Assisted Suicide and End-of-Life Decisions
 - Appendix F: Issues to Consider When Exploring End-of-Life Decisions
 - APA Resolution on End-of-Life Issues and Care
 - APA Resolution on Assisted Suicide
 - Available at the APA's EOL website:
<http://www.apa.org/pi/aging/programs/eol/index.aspx>

- 2001-2007 APA convened an Ad Hoc Committee on End-of-Life Issues (highlights)
 - Sponsored 2 Congressional briefings
 - Developed several fact sheets (e.g., diversity, SES)
 - Developed CE Workshop for APA convention
 - Published an article in *PPRP*
 - Co-sponsored an international conference
 - Received nearly \$1M in grant funding to develop a set of 10 online and print version CE modules
 - Coordinated a Children and Adolescents Task Force that issued a report in 2005
 - Examined reimbursement options for Psychologists in Hospice under Medicare
 - Conducted a series of national surveys

- EOL CE Module Participation

Overview of End-of-Life Issues for the Mental Health Provider	321
Assessment and Treatment of Psychological Distress near the End-Of-Life	174
Assessment and Treatment of Pain	109
Diagnosis and Treatment of Cognitive Changes at the End of Life	62
Grief and Bereavement	214
Religious and Spiritual Issues At the End of Life	94
Family Caregiving Issues at the End of Life	91
Team Work in End-Of-Life Care	62
Law and Ethics Associated With Care at the End of Life	114
Advance Care Planning: Module 10	66

Current Efforts

- Working Group on End-of-Life Issues and Care has been in place for about 18 months
 - Main focus has been on reviewing and updating the Resolutions on End-of-Life Care and on Assisted Suicide
 - The End-of-Life Care Resolution was updated significantly to reflect growing attention to palliative care
 - The title of the Assisted Suicide Resolution was changed to Assisted Dying but the content was largely unchanged
 - Presenting this Symposium at the APA Convention
 - Discussing developing articles in the *Monitor*, manuscripts for professional journals, CE options, fact sheets, blog postings, and collaborations with other groups (inside and outside of APA)