



Press Release: Essential Reading for World Suicide Prevention Day

Today is World Suicide Prevention Day. It is a day on which we remember and recommit ourselves to the task of preventing something that is a tragedy, regardless of who commits suicide or why.

The Anscombe Bioethics Centre's past and ongoing research on assisted suicide provides a rigorous and evidence-based perspective about how we might best prevent suicide, as [we highlighted on this day last year](#).

This year we would like to draw attention to the publication of an important collection of essays on '[The Reality of Assisted Dying: Understanding the Issues](#)'. It is something that deserves to read widely, especially by the legislators and policy experts who will be involved in upcoming debates in [Holyrood](#) and [Westminster](#) about whether or not to legalise assisted suicide.

The collection of essays, edited by Baroness Finlay of Llandaff and Julian Hughes, according to a [recent article](#), 'appears at a critical moment in the UK debate. It provides up-to-date reflections from a broad variety of international experts on the profoundly important issues that surround changes in the law.'

The Director, Prof. David Albert Jones, has contributed an essay on *The imperative to prevent suicide and not to encourage or assist it*. It is an accessible and concise chapter about why every suicide is a tragedy and why suicide prevention is so important.

He writes: 'Rather than thinking of suicide as a person doing harm, suicide prevention strategies regard suicide as a person suffering harm and ask how we might help avert this. In thinking of suicide, we should begin, then, not with individual actions taken in isolation, but with social solidarity. It is true that everyone must die his or her own death, but human death is never simply a private matter. It involves us all.'

He stresses the important of solidarity as a guiding motive: 'Suicide is not just the person's business. Suicide, and suicide prevention, is everyone's business.'

[Research shows](#) us that permitting physician-assisted suicide encourages the rates of non-assisted suicide.

It is therefore crucial to prevent physician-assisted suicide from being permitted and we must maintain laws that forbid encouraging suicide: 'The current law in England and Wales against encouraging or assisting suicide helps prevent suicide. The current law is an effective safeguard for the vulnerable which should not be abandoned lightly.'

END

Notes to Editors:

- Any part of the above can be quoted as coming from our Director, Professor David Albert Jones.
- If the issues discussed here affect you or someone close to you, you can call Samaritans on 116 123 (UK and ROI), [visit their website](#) or contact them on: jo@samaritans.org
- If you are reporting or writing about a case of death by suicide, whether assisted or non-assisted, please [consult the Samaritans' media guidelines](#) on how to do so responsibly.
- For more background information on this issue, see the [Anscombe Centre briefing paper on assisted suicide and suicide prevention](#).
- The Anscombe Bioethics Centre is publishing a series of briefing papers on euthanasia and assisted suicide (EAS), clarifying the issues at stake in the social, political, and medical discussion, examining the definitions concerning and practical consequences of legalising physician involvement in assisting a patient to end their own life, or directly causing their death. You can read the full briefing paper series on its dedicated page on our website, here.
- For more information on the Anscombe Bioethics Centre, see our website: www.bioethics.org.uk
- For interviews or comment, contact: media@bioethics.org.uk



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