

Do You Want a Doctor with a Clear Conscience?



“I ignored my conscience, opting instead to follow the college policy and convincing myself that I had no choice ... this was destructive to my very core. I felt like a shell of myself. Months later, I often still do. I came very close to leaving palliative care at the time, and every day I continue to question my ability to stay in this field.” – Former palliative care physician

Talking Points:



The Problem (for Doctors)

- > Doctors must not be coerced to participate in something they believe is wrong. Such coercion inflicts real harm on the doctor's **moral integrity**, undermining their humanity.
- > A doctor should never be forced to simply provide whatever service or procedure a patient asks for. Such coercion inflicts real harm on the doctor's **professional integrity**, undermining their dignity.

The Problem (for Patients)

- > There is a shortage of doctors in Canada, yet many doctors – due to conscience-violating policies – are forced to leave the profession or move to another jurisdiction.
- > Many Ontario patients want a doctor who will give an honest assessment of what they believe is best for the patient.
- > When a doctor refuses to perform a procedure, they do so because they believe the procedure will be harmful for the patient. Every patient should have a right to make fully informed decisions, which includes access to unfiltered medical opinions from sincere doctors.
- > Patients must be able to find a doctor who they know will never help them access euthanasia.





Quick Facts:

- > *Freedom of Conscience is protected under section 2(a) of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.*
- > *The College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario (CPSO) regulates the practice of medicine. If a doctor fails to follow their standards, he or she may be penalized or even lose his or her license.*
- > *If medical professionals object to providing controversial procedures like euthanasia, they are still required to participate through an 'effective referral' to facilitate euthanasia, connecting their patient with a doctor who will provide the procedure. This requirement is morally problematic for many physicians.*



Ask your MPP to commit to the following:

- #1 Will you introduce and/or support legislation to provide greater conscience protection for doctors?
- #2 Will you encourage the Premier, the Minister of Health, and other MPPs to pursue conscience protection for doctors?

Questions to ask:



- #1 Do you agree that medical professionals should be able to refuse to participate in procedures they believe will harm their patients?
- #2 Do you think doctors should be able to follow their moral and professional convictions when making recommendations to a patient?
- #3 Are you willing to speak out in defence of freedom of conscience and so help offset Ontario's doctor shortage and attract more medical professionals to the province?

For more information on this issue, check out ARPA Canada's policy report on Conscience in Healthcare!