

JOINT STATEMENT

Association of Registered Nurses of BC (ARNBC)
Canadian Nurses Protective Society (CNPS)

February 12, 2016

Legal Support Now Available for BC Nurses to Manage Concerns around Physician Assisted Death

As of February 6, 2016, pursuant to the Supreme Court of Canada (SCC) decision in [Carter v. Canada](#), some British Columbians are now able to apply to the courts for permission to die by physician-assisted dying (PAD), as long as certain requirements are met. This raises immediate legal questions and concerns for Registered Nurses and Nurse Practitioners in British Columbia about their nursing role in physician assisted death.

As announced previously, beginning on March 1, 2016, B.C. RNs and NPs will receive not only their professional liability protection from the [Canadian Nurses Protective Society](#) (CNPS), but access to numerous other services to help them better understand and manage risk, including independent legal advice. However, due to the importance of the SCC decision, ARNBC has requested and CNPS has agreed to answer enquiries from B.C. RNs and NPs regarding PAD, at no additional charge, *effective immediately*.

It is important for all RNs and NPs to be aware that neither the SCC nor the federal government have yet to consider the role of nurses in this process and that without a court order, PAD still constitutes an offense under the Criminal Code. Moreover, the Criminal Code contains a provision making it an offence to counsel a person to commit suicide, which has not yet been the subject of review by the courts in the context of PAD. For these reasons, it would be prudent for nurses to not engage in a discussion about PAD with a patient, unless the patient has first raised the issue. We also refer you to the recent [statement](#) published by CRNBC.

All RNs and NPs are invited to contact CNPS if they require advice about PAD in connection with their practice. Any information you provide the CNPS will remain confidential. Nurses may also want to consider speaking with their supervisor, or workplace contacts in risk management or professional practice.

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