



PATCHSA POSITION STATEMENT ON EUTHANASIA IN CHILDREN

In light of the present discussion around euthanasia in South Africa PatchSA calls on the South African Government to implement its National Policy Framework and Strategy on Palliative Care 2017- 2022 with immediate effect.

Palliative care aims to relieve physical, social, emotional, and spiritual suffering and to improve quality of life of both the child and the child's family. This is achieved through expert holistic care by health care practitioners trained in children's palliative care and with access to the necessary medications.

Palliative care is a human right and every child (from birth to 18 years) with a life-threatening or life-limiting illness or severe disability should have access to quality palliative care. As a community of children's palliative care practitioners and concerned parents/families, we believe that these children have the right to a life that is valued and protected.

We do not believe that euthanasia is the way to relieve the child and family's suffering and it is not part of children's palliative care nor an alternative to it.

It is a moral imperative for South Africa to work towards a health care system where every child has access to high quality palliative care, including appropriate pain and symptom control, should they need it. We call on the South African government and a compassionate society to transform these children's lives through the urgent development of children's palliative care services, the training of all health care workers and the immediate implementation of the National Policy Framework and Strategy on Palliative Care 2017- 2022.

This includes:

1. Adequate provision of and access to palliative care for children and family members throughout the South African health care system.
2. Access to appropriate pain and symptom management (including opioids and paediatric formulations) for all children who need it.
3. Support for children with palliative care needs to live their lives as well as possible for as long as possible.
4. Ensuring children at the end of life experience a peaceful and pain-free death with appropriate support for their families.
5. Access to bereavement support for family members after the death of a child.

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