



The W. Maurice Young Centre for Applied Ethics Presents

In a Familiar Voice: The Dominant Role of Women in Shaping Canadian Policy on Medical Assistance in Dying

Presenter: Dr. Daryl Pullman, Professor of Medical Ethics, Memorial University of Newfoundland

Date/Time: Tue 13 Nov 2018, 3pm to 4:15pm.

Location: SPPH (2206 East Mall), 4th Floor, Room 491

Abstract: Among the many remarkable aspects of the recent introduction of legislation to permit medical assistance in dying (MAiD), is the central and even dominant role that women have played in moving this legislation forward. The index medical cases on which the higher courts have deliberated have all concerned women patients, and the legal decisions in both the British Columbia and then the Canadian Supreme Courts were presided over by women justices. Since the legislation has become law in Canada, women have been among the most vocal and enthusiastic proponents for expanding the criteria to ensure that MAiD is more accessible to more Canadians. In this paper I discuss how the voice of women in this debate is not the 'different voice' of second wave feminism first articulated by Carol Gilligan and then adapted and expanded in the ethics of care and relational ethics literature, but rather the very familiar voice of the ethics of autonomy and justice which feminist critics have long decried as inadequate to the task of articulating a comprehensive social morality. I argue for the need to reassert the different voice of relational ethics and the ethics of care into our ongoing discussion of MAiD.

Bio: Dr. Daryl Pullman is Professor of Medical Ethics in the Faculty of Medicine at Memorial University of Newfoundland (MUN). He received his MA and PhD in philosophy from the University of Waterloo. He has broad and diverse research interests including genetics and ethics, end-of-life care, and ethics and aging. Dr. Pullman has published widely on issues in research and clinical ethics. He has a particular interest in the concept of human dignity and its relevance to discussions of genetics and identity.

Most recently, Pullman was one of the recipients of 2018 Governor General's Innovation Award as a member of the MUN research team for their ground-breaking discovery and treatment of a cardiac muscle disorder known as arrhythmogenic right ventricular cardiomyopathy (ARVC). The group has also spearheaded the establishment of life-saving screening methods and changes to important health legislation.