



Dying alone - is it all that bad?

Dying alone may actually not be as bad as we think, according to a leading professor at the University of Bath.

Professor Allan Kellehear, head of the Department of Social & Policy Sciences, will contradict popular opinion when he presents his latest paper at the National Cancer Research Institute conference in Birmingham next week (5 October).

In the paper, Dying Old - and Preferably Alone, Professor Kellehear, explains how some people choose to die alone and it's society that portrays it negatively.

Professor Kellehear, who is also a member of the University's Centre for Death & Society, said: "Dying alone is different to dying lonely.

"We often see stories in the media about people being "left" to die alone resulting in questions asking why this should be allowed to happen? But realistically some people choose to die this way.

"For some people dying alone is dignified and dying surrounded by machines is not dignified.

"Some would rather die at home alone, rather than put up with 'interfering' medical, health or community members that might expose them to greater risk of being placed into 'an institution'."

Professor Kellehear's research was a review of existing research, comparing the coronial findings and interviews with family and neighbours of people found dead or dying alone with other research examining the views of the elderly about their end of life care preferences.

He found that the two bodies of related research did not tally with one another.

One per cent of all deaths in the UK each year are people who die alone amounting to around 1,000 people.

Professor Kellehear hopes that his research will introduce the idea into discussion and help to develop policies.

ENDS

About the NCRI Cancer Conference

The National Cancer Research Institute (NCRI) Cancer Conference is the UK's major forum for showcasing the best British and international cancer research. The Conference offers unique opportunities for networking and sharing knowledge by bringing together world leading experts from all cancer research disciplines. The fifth annual NCRI Cancer Conference is taking place from the 4-7 October 2009 at the International Convention Centre in Birmingham.

For more information visit www.ncri.org.uk/ncriconference

About the NCRI

The National Cancer Research Institute (NCRI) was established in April 2001. It is a UK-wide partnership between the government, charity and industry which promotes co-operation in cancer research among the 21 member organisations for the benefit of patients, the public and the scientific community.

For more information visit www.ncri.org.uk

NCRI members are: the Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry (ABPI); Association for International Cancer Research; Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council; Breakthrough Breast Cancer; Breast Cancer Campaign; Cancer Research UK; CHILDREN with LEUKAEMIA, Department of Health; Economic and Social Research Council; Leukaemia Research; Ludwig Institute for Cancer Research; Macmillan Cancer Support; Marie Curie Cancer Care; Medical Research Council; Northern Ireland Health and Social Care (Research & Development Office); Roy Castle Lung Cancer Foundation; Scottish Government Health Directorates (Chief Scientist Office); Tenovus; Welsh Assembly Government (Wales Office of Research and Development for Health & Social Care); The Wellcome Trust; and Yorkshire Cancer Research.

www.ncri.org.uk/ncriconference

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