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Upholding Human Dignity: The Role of Mission Leaders in Catholic Healthcare Amid the Challenges of VAD

Abstract

In today's diverse world, Catholic Healthcare continually faces ethical challenges related to recognizing the inherent value of human life, given advances in medical practices and societal views on the dignity of life.

The focus of this paper is to highlight the role of the Mission Leader in addressing ethical challenges related to human dignity, particularly Voluntary Assisted Dying (VAD) in Catholic Healthcare as a challenge to Catholic social teaching principles, especially the principle of human dignity. This paper explores this through the teachings of Pope John Paul II and Pope Francis.

As VAD becomes increasingly legalised and normalised across Australia and many parts of the world, Catholic healthcare institutions are being confronted with complex moral and legal dilemmas that test their ability to remain faithful to Church teaching while continuing to serve the broader public.

This paper argues that the mission leader plays a crucial role in addressing the issue of VAD, and it is essential for the mission leader to have a comprehensive understanding of the Catholic Church's teachings related to human dignity. Additionally, the mission leader should develop practical strategies to support a Catholic organization in responding to voluntary assisted dying, ensuring that the organization's Catholic identity and integrity are preserved while continuing the mission of the universal church through dialogue and bridge-building.

Drawing on real-world scenarios, scholarly materials, policies, observations, and comments from Mission Leaders, this paper will discuss the strategies and methodologies that Mission Leaders can employ to address challenges related to VAD with compassion while maintaining the dignity of human life from a Catholic perspective.

This paper demonstrates that Mission Leaders in Catholic healthcare serve as stewards of the Church's teachings on human dignity, ensuring that the care provided is grounded in the Catholic understanding of human dignity, that every life has inherent, God-given worth from conception to natural death. With the increasing number of laws and regulations opposing the Church's teaching on the sanctity of human life, and the growing social acceptance of VAD, it is vital to discuss the role of Mission Leaders in Catholic healthcare in addressing challenges related to VAD.

By examining how Mission leaders address VAD and its ethical implications within Catholic Healthcare, this paper highlights the importance of Mission Leaders in guiding the Mission of Catholic Healthcare, ensuring it aligns with Christ's teachings, and embodying Christ in a complex modern world while maintaining a compassionate presence in caring for the sick in our community.