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World Health Assembly calls for improved palliative care

Resolution adopted at annual meeting in Geneva

GENEVA, Switzerland — The World Health Assembly, the governing body of the World Health Organization (WHO), has approved a resolution calling for the strengthening of palliative care as a component of integrated treatment throughout the life course.

Palliative care seeks to relieve pain and suffering and improve the lives of patients (and their families) who are dealing with life-threatening illnesses. WHO estimates that more than 40 million people around the world need palliative care each year.

“Human beings who are near the end of life should be treated with care and respect, no less than human beings at the beginning of life,” stated Scott Fischbach, Executive Director of Minnesota Citizens Concerned for Life Global Outreach (MCCL GO), from Geneva. “This resolution expresses a welcome commitment to the dignity of terminally ill and other suffering patients.”

The resolution was adopted on May 23 at the annual meeting of the World Health Assembly in Geneva.

The United Nations’ Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights has noted that “States are under the obligation to respect the right to health by ... refraining from denying or limiting equal access for all persons ... to preventive, curative and palliative health services.”

WHO estimates that 80 percent of the world’s population lacks adequate access to pain-management medications that are crucial for palliative care. The WHO resolution calls for those drugs to be made accessible to all, and for information about palliative care and pain management to be made available and part of educational programs for medical students.

“MCCL Global Outreach continues its call for the international community to respect all human life, at every stage of development—with extra protection and care for those who are most vulnerable,” Fischbach concluded.

MCCL GO is a pro-life NGO global outreach program of the Minnesota Citizens Concerned for Life Education Fund with one goal: to save as many innocent lives as possible from the destruction of abortion. Learn more at www.mccl-go.org.

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