

Anorexia and the will to live: Canada poised to expand physician-assisted suicide to those with mental illnesses

Lisa Pauli wants to die.

The 47-year-old has wrestled with the eating disorder anorexia for decades; she says she has had a warped relationship with her body since age 8.

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"Every day is hell," she said. "I'm so tired. I'm done. I've tried everything. I feel like I've lived my life."

Pauli cannot legally get medical help to die – yet.

Canada legalized assisted death in 2016 for people with terminal illness and expanded it in 2021 to people with incurable, but not terminal, conditions. The legal changes were precipitated by court rulings that struck down prohibitions on helping people to die.

The new mental health provision will make Canada one of the most expansive countries in the world when it comes to medical assistance in dying (MAID), according to an expert panel report to Canada's parliament.

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Some medical experts say mental illness alone should not be a criterion for assisted death. It can be difficult to determine whether a mental illness is truly irremediable, as the law requires, and to differentiate between pathological suicidality and a rational desire to die, says Sonu Gaiand, chief psychiatrist at Toronto's Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre.

"We don't even understand the biology of most mental illnesses," he said.

[**This is an excerpt. Read the full article here**](#)