

Group warns against laws aiding dying

WASHINGTON (CNS) — An anti-euthanasia group has warned that if "aid-in-dying" laws are approved, Dr. Jack Kevorkian's "death machine" will become standard medical equipment.

On Oct. 23, Kevorkian called police in Pontiac, Mich., to report a "physician-assisted suicide." He later met police at a cabin and led them to the bodies of two women, who were connected to devices Kevorkian said he had used to help them die.

Several days later, Kevorkian's attorney released a videotape made by the women — Sherry Miller, 43 of Roseville, Mich., and Marjorie Wantz, 58, of Sodus, Mich. — explaining their decision to their families. The tape showed the women discussing the details of their planned suicides with relatives and Kevorkian.

A short time later, Ms. Wantz died after giving herself a lethal injection using the machine Kevorkian invented. Ms. Miller then pulled a mask over her face and inhaled a fatal quantity of carbon monoxide.

In a statement released Oct. 24, Rita Marker, director of the International Anti-Euthanasia Task Force, said, "Kevorkian clearly personifies the true face of the euthanasia movement."

She quoted Kevorkian as saying a Washington state initiative that would legalize euthanasia "doesn't go far enough."

"We implore people across this country



Dr. Jack Kevorkian, a retired pathologist from Royal Oak, Mich., displays his controversial "suicide machine." File photo

to recognize that, if so-called 'aid-in-dying' is approved, Kevorkian's death machine will become a piece of 'medical equipment' and the lives of every dependent or vulnerable person will be in grave danger," Marker said.

Neither of the women in the recent suicides was terminally ill. Ms. Miller suffered from multiple sclerosis, which is not usually fatal. Ms. Wantz suffered from a painful pelvic disease.

A spokesman for the U.S. bishops' Secretariat for Pro-Life Activities said Kevorkian's help and public support for the

assisted suicides of "non-dying but depressed women ... highlight the fact that the agenda of euthanasia advocates has already gone well beyond discussions of terminal illness."

The spokesman, Richard Doerflinger, also disagreed with the argument that doctor-assisted suicide should be legalized to allow government regulation of it. Experience with state-sanctioned euthanasia in Germany and the Netherlands "rebutts this deceptive argument," he added.

"Legalizing medical killing does not lead to effective regulation — it only leads

to more killing," Doerflinger said.

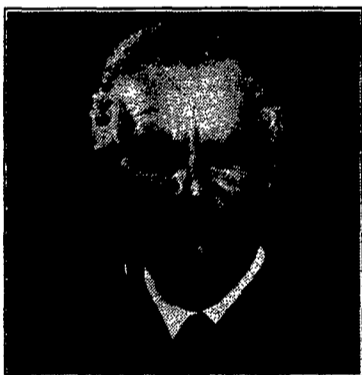
In a previous case, a Michigan judge dismissed a murder charge against Kevorkian for helping a patient to die. The judge ruled that the state had no law against assisted suicide.

In the latest deaths, an Oakland County sheriff's deputy said his office could take two weeks to determine whether to file charges against Kevorkian.

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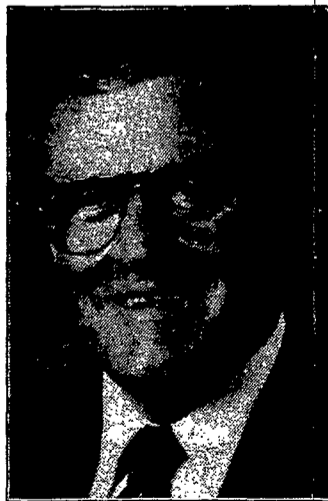
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