

Jennyfer's Story: Better Off Dead

Every day doctors kill about 40 Canadians. The government euphemism for this is "Medical Assistance in Dying". [Under Canada's euthanasia legislation](#) MAiD is open to anyone who is experiencing "unbearable physical or mental suffering from your illness, disease, disability or state of decline that cannot be relieved under conditions that you consider acceptable".

A Vancouver woman named Jennyfer Hatch died on October 23 at the hands of a MAiD doctor. She was suffering from a rare disease, [Ehlers-Danlos syndrome](#), which gave her constant pain. There is no cure for EDS; the best doctors can do is manage the symptoms and check for complications.

Before she died, Jennyfer was the protagonist of a very artistic short film, "[The Most Beautiful Exit](#)", about the hard "beauty" of dying through MAiD. It was part of a marketing campaign for a Quebec-based upscale fashion chain, La Maison Simons. [As we reported last month](#), the "the glittering video can't quite hide the ghoulish side of this stunt".

The film – [which went viral on YouTube](#) – did not disclose Jennyfer's identity. But last week [CTVNews named her](#) and explained why she chose to die.

Because the Canadian health system failed her.

Speaking at a memorial service organised by [Vancouver Unitarians](#), her friend Tama Recker said tearfully: "She was such a fierce advocate for her own health and she was let down over and over and over again."

"What she hoped that it would do is push the envelope that people could understand that it was her choice," Ms Recker

later told [CTVNews](#). “Our (health-care) system is very broken and part of what Jennyfer wanted to do is get people talking.”

In fact, Jennyfer wanted to live. Back in June, [she spoke to CTVNews](#) under a pseudonym. This is how she described her predicament.

“I thought, ‘Goodness, I feel like I’m falling through the cracks so if I’m not able to access health care am I then able to access death care?’ And that’s what led me to look into MAID and I applied last year”. She went on to say that she had hoped to access palliative care or other means of support. However, she said, her “suffering was validated to the extent of being approved for MAID, but no additional resource has opened up.”

Jennyfer was, by the way, well connected. She worked with [Lumara](#), an organisation which provided grief and bereavement counselling. If she could not squeeze compassionate support out of the health bureaucracy, what chance do others have?

A recent report by the Economist Intelligence Unit described Vancouver as the fifth most livable city in the world. In health care it had a perfect score. *The Economist* obviously didn’t ask Jennyfer.

Jennyfer was a chronically ill Canadian woman who was intelligent and well-connected and lived in a city which boasts some of the best health care in the world.

But she still felt compelled to choose euthanasia.

More and more Jennyfers are becoming eligible for euthanasia in Canada. Like her, they don’t need to be in unbearable pain. Like her, their illness need not be terminal. And last year a bill permitting people with mental illness to request euthanasia sailed through parliament.

What they were really voting for is a system which tells chronically ill patients that they are better off dead. I don't know how Canadian parliamentarians can bear to look at themselves in the mirror.

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