



Joint Centre for Bioethics  
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

## BIOETHICS SEMINAR

March 15, 2017, 4:10-5:30 pm

155 College St., Room 108 (main floor, to the right of the elevators)

This event will be webcast:

<https://jcb.adobeconnect.com/bioethicsseminars/>

# *“Is this a Capable Request for Medical Assistance in Dying?”: An Ethics Analysis of the Literature Describing Capacity Assessment Tools within Mental Health Practice*

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**Abstract:** Standards of practice continue to evolve around eligibility assessments of patients who request for Medical Assistance in Dying (MAID). While patients with a primary diagnosis of mental health illness cannot request MAID per the current eligibility criteria, those with an underlying or concurrent mental health illness are not necessarily precluded from doing so. The presence of an underlying mental health illness adds an additional layer of complexity to capacity assessments for which there already exists variability in practice. Through on-going work by the inter-disciplinary Joint Centre for Bioethics Task Force on MAID, capacity assessments for MAID requests have emerged as an area requiring standardization as well as deeper ethical contemplation. In this presentation, key findings of the capacity assessment tools reviewed in the literature will be analyzed for their alignment with the overarching principles of accountability, collaboration, dignity, equity, respect and transparency. The goal is not to suggest a new tool or modify an existing one. Rather, it is to provide the opportunity to share ethical and practical concerns about the robustness of capacity assessments in order to consider how existing processes may be adapted and standardized. The evolving landscape of legal and moral acceptability for MAID calls for re-envisioning social norms, and revising clinical instruments to appropriately suit the capacity assessment objectives and context.

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