



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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Hawai'i Department of Health releases six-month progress report on Our Care, Our Choice Act

HONOLULU – Since the Our Care, Our Choice Act went into effect on Jan. 1, 2019, a total of eight patients with a terminal illness were able to learn about their full range of care options, including palliative care and hospice care, and gain access to aid-in-dying prescription medications, according to a progress report issued today by the Hawai'i Department of Health. Of this total, two patients took the medications to end their suffering.

The six-month old law enables Hawai'i residents 18 years old or older who are diagnosed with a terminal illness and have a prognosis of six months or fewer to live to obtain an aid-in-dying prescription after two separate verbal requests to a physician, a written request with two witnesses, and a mental health evaluation to ensure they are capable of making decisions for themselves.

The law also requires healthcare providers to educate their patients about “feasible alternatives or additional treatment opportunities, including but not limited to comfort care, hospice care, and pain control.”

“This has been a collaborative effort and the dedication of Hawaii’s healthcare providers to help patients and their families navigate the system has played a critical role in successfully implementing the law,” said Lorrin Kim, the Department of Health’s chief policy officer and legislative coordinator. “There is more discussion in the community about supportive care alternatives when curative treatment is no longer viable.”

Other highlights of the report include:

- Three known deaths occurred during this reporting period of which two patients ingested aid-in-dying medication;
- Lung cancer, prostatic carcinoma, and amyotrophic lateral sclerosis are the causes of death;
- Twenty-two days was the shortest period of time from a patient’s first oral request to receipt of their aid-in-dying prescription;
- Four ‘Oahu-based physicians wrote prescriptions;

- DDMP2 was the only aid-in-dying medication prescribed;
- No complications from taking the aid-in-dying medication were reported; and
- Half of the qualified patients who received a prescription enrolled in hospice.

The full report is available at <http://health.hawaii.gov/opppd/ococ>.

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