

Not a 'Mercy' Killing?

A murder suicide in Toronto by the elderly husband of a woman in the early stages of Alzheimer's was reported as a 'mercy' killing. Alex Schadenberg of the Euthanasia Prevention Coalition, wrote in the *Globe and Mail* on 30 August 2006:

"A study published in the March 2005 issue of the *American Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry* by Julie E Malphurs and Donna Cohen concluded: 'In fact, the "mercy killing" perception is a myth. The husbands in such cases are often abusers and the wives are rarely compliant. In many such cases, defence wounds indicate that the wife fought for her life.'

"The authors of the study indicated that many of these terrible incidents could be avoided by providing good care to both the ailing spouse and the otherwise healthy spouse. Many 'healthy' spouses suffer depression and mental breakdown due to the demands and changes related to the care of an ailing partner".

Note: In Britain, a study by SPAIN, a coalition of charities including Help the Aged and Age Concern, said the number of households receiving home care had fallen by a quarter since 1997. (*Daily Telegraph*, 25 July 2005).

To remind: Jane Campbell noted in an article in *The Guardian* on 9 May 2006 that Lord Joffe, as a member of the royal commission on long term care for the elderly, issued a minority report with one other member, saying that social care support should not be free at the point of delivery. This was acted on by the Government.