

## The Arrogance of Entrenched Power

**Rod Taylor**

Leader, CHP Canada

David Stephan and his wife Collet have been sentenced to, respectively, four months jailtime and three months house arrest for “failing to provide the necessities of life” for their 19-month old son, Ezekiel, who died of meningitis in March, 2012. That’s when the Stepahns treated their son, the youngest of four, with natural remedies, not realizing that he had bacterial meningitis. By the time they called for an ambulance, it was too late. What began as a family tragedy has now become a court judgment on personal choice, parental rights, and a state-imposed bias in favour of government-sanctioned medicine.

The Stepahns were tried by jury in April of this year and found guilty for not seeking timely help from a medical doctor. They thought their son had croup and sought advice from a naturopath. In the end, the failure to properly diagnose and treat the meningitis led to Ezekiel’s death. On June 24, they were sentenced by a judge. Although Justice Rodney Jerke acknowledged that the Stepahns were “caring parents and neither intended to put the boy’s life at risk,” he passed sentence on them for relying on their own instincts and bypassing the commonly-accepted practice of bringing children to medical doctors for diagnosis and treatment.

Crown prosecutor Lisa Weich, who was seeking a much longer sentence for the Stepahns, claimed that the crown was trying to provide a “voice for Ezekiel.” More on that later.

Our hearts are moved with compassion for these loving parents who—following the dictates of conscience and their understanding of the standard approach to medicine—took their responsibilities as primary caregivers seriously and attempted to provide natural nutritional therapy for the child they loved. Let’s look at a couple of the assumptions made by judge and jury. We cannot in this short article address in detail all of the many conflicts between “industry-standard” medicine and “alternative therapies,” but we wish to focus on the “one size fits all” approach which would take decision-making away from parents on many levels and what that means for all of us.

1. We all appreciate the medical profession and most of us have been greatly helped, from time to time, by the accumulated knowledge of doctors, by prescribed medications, and procedures. Had I not received medical intervention on several occasions, I might not be alive today . . . but do medical doctors always succeed? Do doctors ever make errors in judgment? Do medical errors in judgment ever result in unnecessary deaths? The answer, of course is that doctors (and judges), like all people, make mistakes. Sometimes those mistakes cost lives. One author, a medical doctor himself, says that medical errors are the “third-leading cause of death in the U.S.” Here, in a PBS interview<sup>1</sup>, Dr. Martin Makary of John Hopkins University School of Medicine details the research he’s conducted that indicates as many as 250,000 Americans die each year as a result of medical error. The concept is not new. “Iatrogenesis” refers to adverse or unintended health outcomes caused by physicians<sup>2</sup>, pharmacists<sup>3</sup>, nurses<sup>4</sup>, dentists<sup>5</sup>, psychologists<sup>6</sup>, medical laboratory scientists<sup>7</sup>, and therapists<sup>8</sup>. Iatrogenesis can also result from complementary and alternative medicine<sup>9</sup> treatments.. If trained professionals can “make a mistake,” why are these parents

singled out for their error in judgment? In this case, it should also be noted that meningitis is sometimes fatal, even when treated by a medical doctor. It has many possible causes, including adverse vaccine reaction, has an often-vague, unspecific symptom picture which can result in misdiagnosis early in the disease, and diagnosis is considered difficult in children under two years of age. Modern treatments have reduced mortality rates to less than 10% which means that doctors on average lose less than one meningitis patient in ten. If that one happens to be your child, you will have the same grief in loss as the Stephans but without the legal trauma.

2. In Canada, medical doctors, paid through our universal healthcare system (ie. taxpayer-funded), not only make occasional errors but some of them “make a living” killing babies!
3. Each year, over 100,000 pre-born children are deliberately killed by abortionists. Yet when this couple try (unsuccessfully) to restore their child to health, they are punished. Something is awfully wrong here. When Crown Prosecutor Lisa Weich claims to be a “voice for Ezekiel,” I have to ask, “Why do you not seek to be a voice for the 100,000 who are deliberately killed each year?” Many medical procedures or drug regimens accepted as standard care within our public system carry “unintended consequences.” Some of these are well-known; others are suspected. Most such claims are denied by those who profit from the procedures or from the drugs. For instance, multiple studies indicate that abortion in a first pregnancy dramatically increases the risk of breast cancer. This information is denied to most young women considering abortion. Another example is the risks associated with vaccinations; many Canadians are concerned about a suspected link between childhood vaccinations and the onset of autism. An adverse reaction to vaccination can even be meningitis, but rarely is the perpetrator held accountable. These concerns are routinely treated as baseless fear-mongering by—guess who?—the pharmaceutical companies. Further to this, many people die during cancer treatments; some die from the treatment, not from the disease. We all make the best choices we can under trying circumstances. In hindsight, we sometimes make mistakes. In other areas of criminal law, “intent” is key to culpability. In this case, failure to follow the crowd was deemed criminal. The personal tragedy of losing a child was compounded by public shaming and punishment.
4. With the passage of C-14 earlier this month, the Canadian medical profession entered a new era of medical malpractice. Doctors now have become dispensers of death potions to those who request them. So far, several Colleges of Physicians have closed ranks and have demanded that doctors within the system either participate in ending the lives of their “eligible” patients or at least refer them to another doctor who will. This violation of conscience is being challenged in court but once again, it raises the contrasting image of doctors deliberately killing while parents trying to protect their children are judged for failing to consult a doctor. Where is the rational logic? Where is compassion? Where is the understanding of a parent’s role in determining what is best for their children? This is a hazardous world. We have each had “close calls” with death or disaster due to a momentary lapse in attention or judgement. By God’s grace, things usually end up alright, but most of us carry deep regrets for some ill-timed act, misjudgement of a situation, or a neglected need. There is a time to extend grace and understanding to those who are already bearing the burden of loss.

The Christian Heritage Party stands by the family, not only this family but all families who seek to raise their children according to their own standards and beliefs. Professionals are not always right. Judges are not always right. Doctors are not always right. When the government usurps the role of parents and forces children to submit to government-prescribed medicine, education, gender agendas, or secular religion, that government is out of line. Many parents will not agree with the Stephans' approach to medicine. All parents, however, should oppose the compulsory imposition of a narrow point of view of medicine on parents who have been given their sacred responsibility by God. Alternative approaches to medicine should not be universally condemned because of one treatment gone wrong any more than we should judge standard medical procedures based on mixed outcomes. All evidence should be examined before jumping to conclusions.

To stand with us in defence of parental rights, the sanctity of life and marriage, visit us at [chp.ca](http://chp.ca).

## **Footnotes**

<sup>1</sup> [www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/is-fatal-medical-error-a-leading-cause-of-death/](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/is-fatal-medical-error-a-leading-cause-of-death/)

<sup>2</sup> [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Physician](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Physician)

<sup>3</sup> [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pharmacist](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pharmacist)

<sup>4</sup> [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nurse](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nurse)

<sup>5</sup> [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dentist](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dentist)

<sup>6</sup> [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Psychologist](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Psychologist)

<sup>7</sup> [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Medical\\_laboratory\\_scientist](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Medical_laboratory_scientist)

<sup>8</sup> [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Therapist](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Therapist)

<sup>9</sup> [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Complementary\\_and\\_alternative\\_medicine](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Complementary_and_alternative_medicine)