

Royal College of Surgeons

House of Lords Briefing



Assisted Dying Bill

Second Reading

The Royal College of Surgeons believes the law as it currently stands should not be changed and no system should be introduced to allow people to be assisted to die.

We do not recognise any circumstances under which it should be possible for people to be assisted to die.

Assisted dying facilitated by a medical professional should not be allowed under UK law for the following reasons:

- It would fundamentally alter the role of the doctor and their relationship with their patient. Medical attendants should be present to preserve and improve life – if they are also involved in the taking of life this creates a conflict that is potentially very damaging.
- While we recognise that patients with ‘difficult to manage’ symptoms can create situations that are distressing for the patient, their family and those caring for the patient, a compassionate response to these situations should

involve empathy and working hard to control symptoms and not simply to hasten death. It is unusual to encounter a patient whose symptoms are truly unmanageable and greater availability of palliative care expertise would help this further.

- There is a danger that a “right to die” may become a “responsibility to die” making already vulnerable people even more vulnerable.