



Public call for evidence from the Commission on Assisted Dying

Response from the Royal College of Surgeons of England

The Royal College of Surgeons welcomes the opportunity to submit a response to the Commission on Assisted Dying. We are pleased that the Commission on Assisted Dying has been convened, as we recognise that there is a need for greater clarity around the issue.

Key messages

- The law as it currently stands should not be changed and no system should be introduced to allow people to be assisted to die.
- The College does 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.
- Whilst 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.

We hope that the Commission will be able to make recommendations that respond compassionately to this difficult issue but still protect the doctor-patient relationship and the rights of those approaching the end of their life.

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