

# Healthy elderly people offered assisted suicide

By Henry Samuel in Paris

A SWISS organisation that assists people in ending their own lives has voted to widen its services to elderly people who are not terminally ill.

Exit chose to add "suicide due to old age" to its statutes at an annual general meeting to allow people suffering from psychological or physical ailments linked to old age the choice to end their life.

Assisted dying is legal in Switzerland and in theory even a healthy young person could use such services. However, internal rules vary from group to group.

The move has been criticised by the Swiss Medical

Association. "It gives us cause for concern because it cannot be ruled out that elderly healthy people could come under pressure of taking their own life," said Dr Jürg Schlup, the association's president.

But Exit said that this was unlikely as most people seeking to end their life this way had already been part of the organisation for years.

"Our members told us to get active on this subject. It was ripe for a decision," Bernhard Sutter, Exit's vice-president, said.

"Assisted suicide is a lengthy process. Doctors must take tests and talk to patients for hours asking them to justify their motivations."

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