

Assisted dying

Sir, Civilised medical practice since Hippocrates has been governed by the precepts in the Hippocratic oath, one of which is "I will not give a fatal draught to anyone if I am asked; nor will I suggest any such thing. Neither will I give a woman means to procure an abortion."

In respect of abortion this has already been breached. How sad it will be if the misnamed Assisted Dying bill ceases to recognise the medical attendant as one whose sole purpose is to help the sick and the dying and never purposely to bring their life to an end.

DR JOHN SCOTSON
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Sir, On Friday Lord Falconer's Assisted Dying bill has its second reading debate in the Lords.

We object to the principle behind the bill and we have severe concerns about its drafting, including the provision of minimal and perilous safeguards. However, in the light of the opinion expressed recently by the Supreme Court that Parliament should consider whether, and if so how, the law should be changed, we believe, albeit reluctantly, that the bill should have an unopposed second reading and proceed to its committee stage.

This view is shared by Lord Falconer himself (Letter, June 30). We are confident that the bill's flaws will emerge during that process.

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