

Dutch euthanasia is 'way out of control' as cases leap by 15%

THE number of deaths by euthanasia is soaring, official figures have revealed.

Euthanasia cases in the Netherlands jumped by 15 per cent from 4,188 cases in 2012 to 4,829 last year.

Experts blamed the 'slippery slope' of extending the practice to new groups of people.

Euthanasia is permitted in the country in cases where there is 'hopeless and unbearable suffering', which is increasingly interpreted to cover mental anguish.

Some 3,600 of last year's cases were cancer sufferers, but doctors also killed 97 people with dementia. Three times more people with 'severe psychiatric problems' died by euthanasia than in 2012, rising to 42 from just 14.

Dr Peter Saunders, of the UK's Christian Medical Fellowship,

By **Steve Doughty**
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said: 'What we are seeing in the Netherlands is the steady intentional escalation of numbers with a gradual widening of the categories of patients to be included.'

'The lessons are clear. Once you relax the law on euthanasia or

'Some slopes truly are slippery'

assisted suicide steady extension will follow as night follows day.'

He added that the Dutch figures, published yesterday in the annual report on legal euthanasia deaths for 2013, should be a warning to Britain.

'Euthanasia in the Netherlands

is way out of control,' he said. 'The House of Lords calculated in 2005 that with a Dutch-type law in Britain we would be seeing over 13,000 cases of euthanasia per year. On the basis of how Dutch euthanasia deaths have risen since, this may prove to be a gross underestimate.'

A British assisted dying law is currently being examined by peers. The bill, put forward by former Labour Lord Chancellor Lord Falconer, went before the House of Lords in July and will be considered by a committee next month.

The Dignity in Dying group, which supports the bill, insists it is based on a US model 'which has been working safely for over 17 years and has never been extended beyond the criteria of terminal illness'.

But Professor Theo Boer, who is involved in regulating euthanasia in Holland and was once a firm advocate for the practice, warned Parliament in July not to follow their example.

He said the Dutch were 'terribly wrong' to think they could control it, adding: 'Don't go there'.

He was gravely concerned at the extension of killing to new groups of people, including those with dementia and the depressed. 'Some slopes truly are slippery,' he added.

He predicts the number of annual euthanasia deaths in the Netherlands will reach 6,000 this year.

Doctors in neighbouring Belgium, which this year legalised euthanasia for children, now kill an average of five people every day by assisted suicide, a 27 per cent surge in the last year alone.

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