

End-of-life guidelines

SIR – Professor Pullicino (Comment, August 3) writes that the new end-of-life guidelines put forward by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (Nice) are “lethal”

Under these guidelines, withdrawal of nutrition and hydration is deemed acceptable, even though this may cause great suffering, whereas any “active” involvement to end life, however humane, is illegal.

To identify agitation as a possible indicator of impending death is also horrifyingly misleading. This symptom in the elderly is frequently caused by treatable conditions such as infection and dehydration. It needs assessment by an experienced clinician rather than a tick-box item on a form.

I can't help wondering whether some of the new recommendations are influenced by political considerations, such as cost. I doubt whether the views of an experienced clinician such as Professor Pullicino will prevail, but I hope I am proved wrong.

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