

Doctors: new guidance is deadly

A GROUP representing hundreds of Catholic doctors and nurses has warned the NHS that new guidance on end-of-life care “unquestionably replicates” a major failing of the discredited Liverpool Care Pathway (LCP).

The Catholic Medical Association UK (CMA), which has nearly 500 members, said proposals from the National Institute of Health and Care Excellence (Nice) would be just as deadly as the abolished end-of-life care protocol.

“One of our greatest worries is that the guideline still focuses upon the belief that the diagnosis of dying can be accurately and safely made,” said a submission by the CMA to Nice this week.

“It is very clear that ... the diagnosis of dying is especially difficult in dementia, heart failure and respiratory failure,” the submission said.

“The guideline therefore unquestioningly replicates one of the key failings of the Liverpool Care Pathway and



Prof Patrick Pullicino

suggests to clinicians that they can accurately and reliably make a diagnosis that someone is dying.”

The submission, authored by Dr Philip Howard, a consultant in a London hospital, said that the Nice Guideline Development Group needed to rewrite the entire section to state that “medical treatment and personal care should be based on a careful clinical assessment and tailored to the individual needs of the patient”.

This would be in keeping with the recommendations of the report issued by the

Neuberger Committee which in 2013 recommended the abolition of the LCP after finding evidence of the “shocking” abuse of patients, including the common use of a “chemical cosh” to sedate them before they were starved and dehydrated to death.

“The guidance in this section should flow from the overarching principle that treatment should be based upon need and not prognosis,” the CMA submission said.

“Palliative care should be based upon the relief of symptoms and the needs of the individual patient and not merely on the premise that the clinician thinks someone is dying.”

The concerns of the CMA echo those made by Prof Patrick Pullicino, a consultant neurologist with East Kent Universities NHS Foundation Trust, who described the Nice proposals as a “disaster of misinformation, distortion and ambiguity”.

News in brief

Bishops' agency criticises childcare Bill

THE CATHOLIC Education Service has criticised a Bill proposing to increase free childcare to 30 hours a week. Paul Barber, CES director, praised the move in principle but said a “shortfall” in funding could mean that wider school budgets were disrupted.

Faith leaders pray for peace in Birmingham

ARCHBISHOP Bernard Longley of Birmingham joined other faith leaders at St Thomas's peace garden last week to remember victims of terrorism.

Cardinal Nichols joins meeting in Holy Land

CARDINAL Vincent Nichols and other European bishops' conference presidents met for six days in the Holy Land this week.

Pro-lifers reject call to allow embryos' genes to be edited

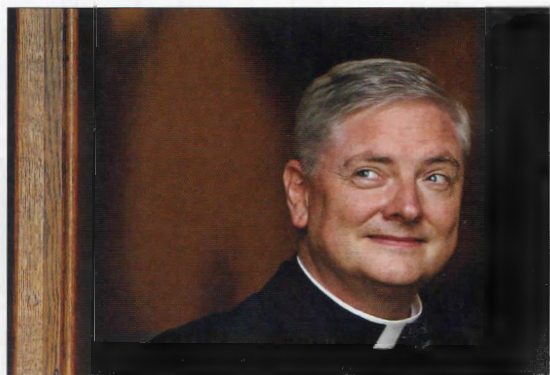
GENETICISTS who want to manipulate the genes of embryos to prevent diseases are acting as if they did not know how complex diseases like cancer are, the Society for the Protection of Unborn Children (SPUC) has said.

Paul Tully, SPUC's general secretary, said: “It is dishonest to trick people into thinking that because a technique can sometimes achieve a precise genetic change, we have the solution to cancer, HIV or other potentially fatal diseases within our grasp. This simply is not the case. Genetics is far more complex than that.”

He was responding to a report

from the Hinxton Group, a lobby group consisting of researchers, bioethicists and policy experts. The group said that editing the genetic code of embryos was of “tremendous value” and was “essential”.

Mr Tully said: “The humanity of the early embryo is more fully recognised than ever, yet instead of compassion towards the early human person, abuses continue on an industrial scale. The new person is genetically complete, human and alive from the time of conception. Using these embryos for research and destroying them breaches norms of human rights and medical ethics.”



Archbishop Cushley: trying to arrange an audience for a dying woman

Archbishop in papal audience appeal

ARCHBISHOP Leo Cushley of St Andrews and Edinburgh is trying to arrange an audience with Pope Francis for a woman who has only months to live.

Corinne Barber, 42, who suffers from a complex heart disorder, is hoping to visit the

Vatican. Her brother has so far raised £5,748 at GoFundMe.com/nvf8q3sk but needs £14,500 to cover costs, including medical insurance. “We urge people to help her in making that aspiration become a reality,” the archbishop said.