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Majority support assisted dying

The raw suffering of Paul Smith as he died from prostate cancer will no doubt be dismissed by those who oppose an assisted dying law for the UK ("Suicide clinics a preserve of middle class", News, last week). When palliative care is effective, deaths can be peaceful; however, when they are not, even some of our most eminent specialists insist that "their" manner of death is best for the terminally ill.

As a retired district nurse, I value the sanctity of life, but not at all costs. With 82% of the public supporting a safeguarded assisted dying law (for competent adults with less than six months to live), it is time for the will of the majority to be put before religious objections.

Pauline Carroll, Bath

Final cost

I am pleased that Dignity in Dying has produced a report on those who have travelled from the UK to Switzerland for a doctor-assisted suicide – almost 400 have done this since October 2002.

I have accompanied five people there since 2005 and I am aware of circumstances involving at least another

40 people. They were a cross-section of British society, from those living in a council flat to others in a private house in London.

But while the average total cost of travelling to Switzerland to die is about £10,000, the price of a cremation in the UK can be at least one-third of this sum.

Michael Irwin, former chairman, Voluntary Euthanasia Society