

Assisted dying

Sir, You write that "leading medical experts" say that "assisted dying has more support than ever" ("Doctors urge legalisation of assisted dying", Feb 8). Just who are these "experts"? They are campaigners for legalisation of physician-assisted suicide. There is no "good evidence", as *The British Medical Journal's* editor, Fiona Godlee, puts it, that legalised assisted suicide is working well elsewhere. In the few jurisdictions that have gone down the "assisted dying" road, the more evidence that emerges of what is happening, the greater the concerns.

The campaigners for legalisation, who include the editorial staff of *The BMJ*, are unhappy that the British Medical Association, along with the medical colleges, opposes legalisation. Most doctors have more sense than to heed these siren calls.

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palliative medicine, Cardiff;
PROFESSOR SCOTT A MURRAY, St Columba's Hospice professor of primary palliative care, the University of Edinburgh; DR IDRIS BAKER, consultant in palliative medicine, Swansea, *plus a further four names at thetimes.co.uk/letters*

Sir, Lord Carlile of Berriew, QC, criticises the publication by *The BMJ* of a poll showing a majority of doctors supporting the legalisation of assisted dying (letter, Feb 12). In doing so, he comments that there is no shift in medical opinion, just "spin".

Last week the Royal Society of Medicine held a conference to discuss the medical and ethical issues surrounding choice at the end of life, including a contribution from a doctor in California who gave first-person accounts of the benefits of their assisted dying law. The conference also heard from people who felt, whether they supported

assisted dying or not, that greater choice and control would benefit dying people.

We should seek a collaborative discussion to learn from best practice and heed the support for reform.

BARONESS MEACHER
Chairwoman, Dignity in Dying