

Canadian way of death

SIR - Professor Sir John Temple says that the "right to die" is an issue that "should be brought more into public consideration" (Letters, August 3).

He lauds the Canadian Medical Association for its "mature and measured input into the implementation of assisted dying", which "has been to the benefit of both patients and doctors". Presumably he only consulted the doctors, because he would be unable to contact any patients who have accessed this "benefit" except by seance.

Canada legalised euthanasia and assisted suicide for "serious and incurable illness, disease or disability", but it was not long before there was a debate in Canada on whether to expand this "boon" to those with long-term conditions. One mother was pressured by doctors to allow her daughter with cerebral palsy to be killed when in hospital for emergency treatment, and it is no wonder that disabled people are now complaining that they have the right to die but not the right to try new treatments.

Prof Temple maintains that "to fulfil our duty to do what is best for our patients, doctors must find a way to provide more meaningful end-of-life choice to those who need and want it". However, in Quebec there is now a waiting list for palliative care - but not for euthanasia.

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