

# Caring doctors don't kill patients with drugs

SIR - Judith Woods (Features, February 8) says that the time has come to examine whether we legalise assisting suicide.

If an "assisted dying" regime is introduced here, doctors cannot be expected to assist their patients with suicide. Supplying terminally ill people with lethal barbiturates to bring about their deaths deliberately is outside a doctor's duty of care.

Doctors are already at breaking point, as the General Medical Council recently warned. Many report they know they are getting burnt out, at risk of mistakes and are considering leaving their profession. How can we expect these doctors to cope with trying to save lives, then ask them to assess thoroughly eligibility for lethal drugs and detect any coercion?

Campaigners for assisted suicide state that this issue is a matter for society. In that case, each application for assisted death should be presented to the courts and managed by them, not by doctors.

If we were ever to go down the assisted dying road, we should do so with open eyes. In the minority of places that have assisted dying regimes, the emerging results are disturbing, but they are glossed over by campaigners. We must learn from their mistakes.

**Baroness Finlay of Llandaff**  
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SIR - For many years, my wife Jane was a senior social worker specialising in mentally ill geriatrics.

She often used to see relatives searching the bags of vulnerable patients, then stealing any money they might find.

Most people appear to have no idea of the depths of viciousness that others indulge in towards the vulnerable. If assisted dying was made lawful, greedy relatives and "friends" would exploit this mercilessly.

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