



## Physicians protest

Sir, We are a group of senior doctors and academics concerned about procedural irregularities related to the Royal College of Physicians' poll of members' views on assisted dying (Thunderer, Jan 23, and letters, Jan 24, 25, 26 & 28). Under the terms of the new census the college will adopt a "neutral" position and drop its opposition to the legalisation of assisted dying unless 60 per cent of members vote to maintain it. We contend that it is wrong to demand a supra-majority simply to maintain the status quo, and we are worried that this move represents a deliberate attempt by a minority on the RCP council to drop the college's opposition to assisted suicide even if the majority of the membership vote to maintain it.

Although we acknowledge that there are a variety of opinions held by doctors on this issue, the last poll carried out by the college found that 58 per cent of members opposed a change in the law, with under 25 per cent believing that the college should campaign in favour of new legislation. We call on the royal college to retain the more orthodox, justifiable and democratic approach that it has used in the past when interpreting this poll.

DR CHARLOTTE ABSON, FRCP, consultant clinical oncologist, Kent;  
 DR ROSEMARY ANTHONY-PILLAR, MRCP, consultant palliative care physician, London; PROFESSOR NIGEL BIGGAR, Regius professor of moral and pastoral theology, University of Oxford; DR STEPHEN BRENNAN FRCP, ret'd consultant physician, Sheffield; DR ALISON BROWNELL, FRCP, FRCPATH, consultant haematologist, Essex; PROFESSOR JOHN SAUNDERS, FRCP, former chairman of ethics, councillor and trustee, Royal College of Physicians  
*Plus a further 17 signatories at [thetimes.co.uk/letters](http://thetimes.co.uk/letters)*

Times 1.2.2019