

Challenging RCP's unfair poll on assisted suicide

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We are taking the Royal College of Physicians to court to challenge the poll it has recently conducted on assisted dying, which looks likely to result in the College dropping its historic opposition to physician assisted suicide. We have set up this GoFundMe page to support the legal challenge. Please consider contributing and sharing this page to ensure that the challenge can be brought.

The Case

In January 2019 the Royal College of Physicians announced its intention to poll its members again on the topic of assisted suicide, and the survey was carried out during February. The College currently opposes a change in the law that would legalise assisted suicide, with 57.5% of its membership being of that view when it last polled in 2014.

A small but influential minority within the College is unhappy with this position as they wish to see the law change. As they realise there is no appetite within the membership to support assisted suicide legislation, they have instead sought to change the College's stance on the issue to 'neutral', by default. The bizarre structuring of the College's current poll on the issue will shift the College's position to neutral unless there is a 60% supra-majority in favour of continuing to oppose such legislation. It means that even if 59% of members vote to maintain opposition to a change in the law, the College will change to a neutral position anyway.

Using a supra-majority to change a policy is, as far as we are aware, entirely without precedent in matters of this kind. Such mechanisms are usually used to prevent long-term constitutional changes being implemented by small but temporary majorities, and thus they should always default to the status quo - in this case opposition to legal change.

Using a supra-majority in this consultation makes it almost inevitable that the College will drop its historic opposition to assisted suicide.

Why this matters

Dignity in Dying, which campaigns to legalise assisted suicide, have identified the opposition of medical Royal Colleges as a key obstacle in achieving their goal, saying to supporters: "we'll only succeed in changing the law when medical organisations stop blocking change."

This consultation therefore appears to be a tactical move to give a powerful boost to

the Parliamentary campaign to change the law on assisted suicide. If the College adopts a position of neutrality, a key voice representing doctors' legitimate opposition to assisted suicide will have been silenced.

We are taking the Royal College of Physicians to court to seek judicial review of their actions. We have been advised that there are good legal grounds on which to challenge the College's handling of the poll, including a breach of legitimate expectation, unfairness and irrationality. However, **we will only be able to bring this legal challenge with your financial support.**

Your donations will be used to fund this legal challenge, and should there be any excess funds, they will be used at our discretion for related campaigns in opposition to assisted suicide (for instance, if similar attempts to impose neutrality are made in other medical institutions). In the event that there are any remaining funds 12 months after the conclusion of this case, they will go to the Association for Palliative Medicine, to be used to develop better care for patients with terminal illnesses in the UK and beyond.

Please give generously and share this page widely within your networks. Thank you very much for your support.

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