

Letters to the Editor

Times 26 3. 2019



Assisted suicide

Sir, The statistic that your report of the Royal College of Physicians poll (Times, Mar 22, and letters, Mar 23 & 24) omits to mention is that only 24.6 per cent of its members who voted stated they will actively participate in assisting a suicide, while 55.1 per cent definitely would not. This suggests that many of those (40.5 per cent of those who voted) who supported a change in the law to permit assisted dying consider it is acceptable as long as it falls on someone else's conscience. I and many of my colleagues who are not prepared actively to take a life are disappointed that the RCP can withdraw its objection to an action that a majority of its members would not be willing to undertake.

Stephanie A Amiel, FRCP

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Sir, Dr Caroline Mawer (letter, Mar 23) complains about "stuffy" doctors who believe they are entitled to tell patients how to manage their own deaths; this is an inaccurate portrayal of the relationship between physicians and their terminally ill patients.

Palliative care teams across the UK dedicate their time to ensuring that patients are empowered to articulate their wishes concerning their treatment, their care and where they would like to spend their last days. It is untrue to imply that patients cannot talk openly with their doctors about assisted death. Patients are encouraged to speak freely and openly.

Doctors who are wary of assisted suicide have not reached this point of view by observing the world from an ivory tower but by standing at the bedsides of their dying patients.

Dr Carol Davis, FRCP

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