

# GPs mull stance on assisted dying

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Health Editor

The Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP) is to consult its more than 53,000 members on whether to drop opposition to assisted dying.

The move by the college that represents family doctors comes just three months after the Royal College of Physicians dropped its opposition to assisted dying and adopted a neutral stance.

The governing council of the GPs' college decided yesterday to seek family doctors' views on assisted dying. The move comes six years after its previous consultation on the subject.

Helen Stokes-Lampard, who chairs the RCGP, said: "Assisted dying is an incredibly emotive issue that polarises opinions."

She said the consultation was being held because it was "possible that views within our membership have shifted" since the last consultation in 2013.

The law makes assisting suicide punishable by up to 14 years in prison.

Doctors have traditionally opposed assisted suicide but a substantial minority has long disagreed.

Prominent cases have ignited intense debate about the issue. Tony Nicklinson, 58, who was paralysed by a stroke and described his locked-in syndrome as a "living nightmare", lost a High Court battle in 2012 to allow doctors to end his life. He died days later after refusing food.

Noel Conway, 68, who says he is "entombed" by motor neurone disease, was turned down by the Supreme Court in his efforts to obtain medical assistance to end his life.

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