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## GPs must ask: do we want to kill people?

You report that the Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP) is to consult members on whether to drop opposition to assisted dying (News, last week). The real question GPs should be asked is: "Do you or do you not want to be licensed to provide lethal drugs to assist suicide or administer euthanasia to your patients?"

Data from Holland reveals that about 1 in 23 deaths are now from euthanasia – mostly performed by GPs – and the numbers are rising. A recent study reported how these GPs feel under pressure from families and others.

For bodies such as the RCGP to declare neutrality on assisted dying signals agreement to undertake such practices. In some jurisdictions medical neutrality has been used to promote such legislation. If

RCGP members do not feel that ending life is the role of a GP, it is clear how they should vote.

*Professor Baroness Finlay  
of Llandaff  
Living and Dying Well*

### Putting patients first

It is only right that the RCGP keeps abreast of the shifting tides of opinion by polling its members on the polarising issue of assisted dying.

Doctors belong to an inherently risk-averse profession. Our primary focus is improving health and quality of life for patients, and to many, assisted dying seems counterintuitive. However, medicine in the UK is moving towards patient-centred care, and respecting the right of patients to make decisions on the management of their own health is important.



Doctors are divided on how far palliative care should go

Regardless, any change in policy must prioritise the wellbeing of the vulnerable and the continued delivery of high-quality, compassionate palliative care for patients.

We are pleased that the RCGP is aware of the diverse range of opinions among GPs and other doctors. Its decision to consider a change of stance to reflect this is to be commended.

*Dr Kaveri Jalundhwala  
The Doctors' Association UK*

### Neutral grounds

The RCGP should make clear that "neutrality", while sounding a reasonable position in a polarised debate, is a key objective of assisted-dying campaigners. Once achieved, it is presented as doctors "dropping opposition" to parliament. Doctors and parliament alike must not be fooled.

*Dr Mark Pickering, chief  
executive, Christian Medical  
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