

Knights of Saint Columba

Accrington Council 188

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Source Christian Institute

A survey due to be conducted by the Royal College of Physicians (RCP) on assisted suicide has been called “a sham”.

The college’s official position is currently ‘against’ assisted suicide, but its members have been told that unless they can secure a 60 per cent majority, its position will change to ‘neutral’.

John Saunders, both a former Chair of Ethics, and a trustee of the RCP said, “the poll is designed to make a change in RCP stance inevitable and could easily do so even if a majority oppose it”. He added, “this is a sham poll with a rigged outcome”.

‘Apparent manipulation’

The RCP will ask its 35,000 members whether “they would help a terminally ill patient to die and whether the law should be changed to allow assisted dying.”

Dr David Randall, of the Royal London Hospital, also criticised the survey, saying: “The membership seems to be being offered a *fait accompli* by members of Dignity in Dying”.

He said the group – formerly the Voluntary Euthanasia Society – has “achieved positions of influence on the RCP council”, and designed the questionnaire “to ensure that the College drops its long-standing opposition to assisted suicide ahead of future parliamentary attempts at legislation”.

He observed that the notion of a 60 per cent ‘supermajority’ has “shed daylight on an apparent manipulation of procedure by pro-euthanasia activists”.

‘Self-killing’

When RCP members were polled in 2014, a similar question used the term “assisted suicide” and 57.5 per cent said ‘no’.

Dominic Lawson, writing for the Daily Mail, commented that the wording change is “in itself a concession to the PR efforts of the people Dr Randall refers to as ‘pro-euthanasia activists’.”

“Medically assisted suicide is the more accurate name for what is being proposed, but it is less appealing, as it translates as ‘self-killing’.

He also added: “It is not unusual for a supermajority to be required for a fundamental change in a constitution: it is unprecedented for one to be required to keep things as they are.”

Warnings

Last week, doctors warned against what has happened in the Netherlands, where assisted suicide is already legal.

Dutch GP Dr Van der Muijsenberg warned: “I see a growing anxiety among patients, not just the terminally ill, that they think it is not decent not to ask for voluntary euthanasia sometimes, because they feel such a burden.”

In light of the survey, Theo Boer, a former member of a Dutch board reviewing acts of euthanasia, also warned: “We have put in motion something that we now have discovered has more consequences than we ever imagined.”

Members of the Royal College of Physicians will be polled on whether they wish to see a change in the law next month.

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