

Knights of Saint Columba

Accrington Council 188

Bulletin No.2- F27

Source Christian Institute

Over 1,800 doctors and medics have signed a letter opposing the Royal College of Physicians' (RCP) change of stance on assisted suicide.

The survey asking members what position they think the RCP should take was branded "rigged" after it was revealed that the College would adopt a 'neutral' position unless 60 per cent voted for it to remain opposed or for it to switch to being in favour.

Medics say that the move sends a message of support for a change in the law.

'Signal of support'

Our Duty of Care, a campaign group set up by Dr David Randall and supported by the 1,800 medics, has written to the RCP objecting to its survey methods.

The letter reads: "It seems perfectly clear the survey has been designed to ensure the college drops its long-standing opposition to assisted suicide and move into a position of so-called 'neutrality'.

...the College is sending a clear signal of support for a law change.

Our Duty of Care

"Indeed, at a recent council meeting, a new default position of neutral was adopted prior to the announcement of the new poll, without any involvement of the wider membership."

"We acknowledge members may hold different views on this complicated and sensitive issue. But by going neutral, the College is sending a clear signal of support for a law change."

Wide-scale euthanasia

When RCP members last voted in 2014, 62.5 per cent agreed that "high quality palliative care" was a better option than assisted suicide, recognising that elderly relatives and people with disabilities would be put at risk.

Medics have historically opposed efforts to legalise assisted suicide in the UK, and critics have warned that it will open the door to wide-scale euthanasia.

Doctors, including the RCP's former Ethics Committee Chair John Saunders, are seeking a judicial review of the poll.

'Duty of care'

Baroness Finlay of Llandaff, a Professor of Palliative Medicine at Cardiff University, said if a regime of assisted suicide is introduced in the UK, "doctors cannot be expected to assist their patients with suicide".

"Supplying terminally ill people with lethal barbiturates to bring about their deaths deliberately is outside a doctor's duty of care."

Bernard Holden MBE JP

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