



The RCP clarifies its position on assisted dying

In early 2019 the RCP carried out an online survey of its members' and fellows' views on the subject of assisted dying.

43.4% of respondents said that the RCP should be opposed to a change in the law on assisted dying, 31.6% said the RCP should support a change in the law, and 25% said the RCP should be neutral. Based on these results RCP Council adopted a position of neutrality on 21st March 2019.

Neutrality was defined as neither supporting nor opposing a change in the law, to try to represent the breadth of views within its membership. Regrettably, this position has been interpreted by some as suggesting that the College is either indifferent to legal change or is supportive of a change in the law.

So that there can be no doubt, the RCP clarifies that it does not support a change in the law to permit assisted dying at the present time.

The RCP would also like to reiterate the following points relevant to the survey and its position:

- The RCP has an important role in informing the societal debate on this issue, and is keen to do so;
- Whilst the ultimate decision on assisted dying rests with society through Parliament, professional and clinical issues pose significant challenges to the success of any future legislation;
- There remain many shortcomings in the provision of palliative care, and physicians of all shades of opinion in the current debate share a commitment to the improvement of care at the end of life;
- There is a plurality of views within the RCP membership on the issue of assisted dying;
- Whilst a significant minority of its fellows and members support a change in the law, a greater number remain opposed;
- The majority of doctors would be unwilling to participate actively in assisted dying if the law were changed to permit it, with only 25% indicating a willingness to do so.

<https://www.rcplondon.ac.uk/news/rcp-clarifies-its-position-assisted-dying>