

## Doctors against assisted dying

We are practising doctors who care daily for dying patients. We believe that the letter published last week in which 50 doctors – many not in clinical practice – called for a review of the law on “assisted dying” skirted round some important facts.

In the results of the British Medical Association survey they quote, support for a change in the law is heavily weighted by responses from medical students and retired doctors. A majority of doctors licensed to practise would not agree to prescribe lethal drugs (assisted suicide), and a larger majority would not administer them (euthanasia). Any marginal interest in the idea is therefore not matched by enthusiasm for the practice.

Every legislature that allows “safeguarded” assisted dying has seen its safeguards breached, starkly illustrating the gap between principle and practice. This is a complex and emotive issue, but one thing is clear: it causes deep divisions in the medical profession – a profession already buckling under the strain of Covid-19.

If ever assisted dying were to be legalised, the role of doctors must be limited to the provision of an opinion on

the applicant’s medical condition. It should be for the courts alone to make decisions – as they do now on life-or-death issues.

*Dr Mark Taubert, consultant in palliative medicine, Cardiff; Dr Kirsten Baron, consultant in palliative medicine, Manchester; Dr Rosemarie Antony-Pillai, consultant in palliative medicine, Surrey; and 50 others. For a full list, see [sundaytimes.co.uk/letters](http://sundaytimes.co.uk/letters)*