

# Top doctors push for an assisted suicide law

BY MADELEINE TEAHAN

TWELVE senior doctors who are former presidents of royal medical colleges have called for the legalisation of physician-assisted suicide.

In a letter to the *Times* they said: "As past presidents of medical royal colleges we believe that there is a strong case for the legalisation of assisted dying for terminally ill, mentally competent adults."

The British Medical Association, the Royal College of Physicians, and the Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP) are all opposed to legalising physician assisted-suicide.

A spokesman for the RCGP said: "The college's position on assisted dying since 2005 has been that, with good palliative care, a change in legislation is not required.

"However, many clinicians and patients feel strongly about this complex and emotive subject, and high-profile cases such as Paul Lamb and Tony Nicklinson have brought it to the forefront once again.

"We believe that the time is now right to review the practical and ethical issues involved and to give our members the opportunity to debate what the RCGP's collective position should be."

A poll by YouGov carried out for Westminster Faith Debates claimed that 56 per cent of Catholics believe that the law should be changed to allow people with incurable disease to allow a friend or relative to assist in their suicide.

Professor Linda Woodhead of Lancaster University, who organised the study, said more church-going Catholics were found to favour a change in the law than oppose it by a margin of 44 per cent to 42 per cent.