

## **Special report from the Select Committee of the House of Lords on Medical Ethics.**

### **Contributors**

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# **SPECIAL REPORT**

**FROM THE**

**SELECT COMMITTEE**

**OF THE**

**HOUSE OF LORDS**

**ON**

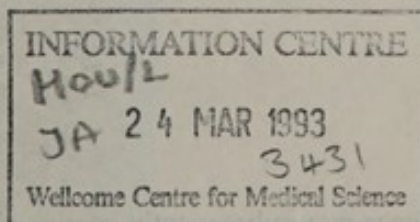
# **MEDICAL ETHICS**

**Session 1992-3**

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# SPECIAL REPORT

## MEDICAL ETHICS

By the Select Committee appointed to consider the ethical, legal and clinical implications of a person's right to withhold consent to life-prolonging treatment, and the position of persons who are no longer able to give or withhold consent;

and to consider whether and in what circumstances actions that have as their intention or a likely consequence the shortening of another person's life may be justified on the grounds that they accord with that person's wishes or with that person's best interests;

and in all the foregoing considerations to pay regard to the likely effects of changes in law or medical practice on society as a whole.

### ORDERED TO REPORT

1. The Committee invite evidence relevant to their terms of reference from any individual or organisation.

2. The Committee draw the attention of potential witnesses to the following issues in particular—

- the respective weight to be attached to the sometimes conflicting moral principles of the sanctity of life and the right to personal autonomy
- the extent of a doctor's duty of care to a patient
- the distinction between the withholding or withdrawal of medical treatment, and deliberate intervention to end life
- the different considerations arising in the case of patients who are legally competent and of sound mind, and of patients who are unable to express their own wishes about treatment
- the role of advance directives and proxy decision-makers
- the role of the courts in interpreting the law in the light of changing medical technology and practice
- the case for change in the existing law, and the nature and extent of such change
- the role of the hospice movement and advances in the care of the terminally ill
- the experience of other countries, in particular in Western Europe and the USA.

3. Evidence should in the first instance be in writing and should be sent to—

The Clerk to the Select Committee on Medical Ethics

Committee Office

House of Lords

London SW1A 0PW

Those submitting written evidence may subsequently be invited to supplement it orally.

4. The Committee request that, where possible, evidence should be submitted by Monday 31 May 1993.



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