

## UK doctor admits he helped patients die

June 21 2010, By RAPHAEL G. SATTER , Associated Press Writer

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(AP) -- A British doctor who admitted shortening the lives of nearly 20 patients - including his own son - may yet face charges, British investigators said Saturday.

Howard Martin, 75, was cleared in 2005 of murdering three patients with fatal doses of [pain killer](#). But he has since had his license revoked and now a dramatic confession to a national newspaper has prompted police and prosecutors to consider reopening the case against him.

Martin, whose videotaped confession was carried Saturday by the Daily Telegraph newspaper, said he had no regrets, claiming he acted out of "Christian compassion" to end the suffering of pain-stricken patients.

"My conscience is clear, I don't have anything to fear," he said in an interview from his home. Describing his decision to end the life of his son, Paul, who was suffering from [cancer](#) before his death in May 1988, he said: "What more could I do for him other than make sure he had dignity?"

But Britain's General Medical Council differed, calling Martin's behavior "completely unacceptable" and saying that in some cases there was no proof the patients were suffering.

And while many of the 18 patients he injected had only days to live, at least one patient - 74-year-old Harry Gittins - could have recovered from esophageal cancer had Martin not administered 200 milligrams of diamorphine the day before he died.

Martin then lied to the family, telling them that Gittins' cancer had spread, the council ruled.

Martin had been charged with murdering Gittins, along with fellow patients Frank Moss, 59, and 74-year-old Stanley Weldon, whose bodies were exhumed at separate cemeteries, but he was eventually acquitted.

On Saturday Gittins' son said he hoped the case against Martin would be reopened.

A 2005 reform to the English legal system means that the principle that prevents people being tried twice for the same crime, known as "double jeopardy," no longer applies.

Defendants may be tried twice for the same crime if "new and compelling" evidence is brought to bear.

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