

Report recommends France legalise 'accelerated deaths'

December 18 2012

France should allow doctors to "accelerate the coming of death" for terminally ill patients, a report to President Francois Hollande recommended Tuesday.

Hollande referred the report to a national council on [medical ethics](#) which will examine the precise circumstances under which such steps could be authorised with a view to producing [draft legislation](#) by June 2013.

"The existing legislation does not meet the legitimate concerns expressed by people who are gravely and incurably ill," Hollande said.

The report said physicians should be allowed to authorise interventions that ensure quicker deaths for terminal patients in three specific sets of circumstances.

In the first case, the patient involved would be capable of making an explicit request to that effect or have issued advance instructions in the event of him or her becoming incapable of expressing an opinion.

The second scenario envisages medical teams withdrawing treatment and/or nourishment on the basis of a request by the family of a dying patient who is no longer conscious and has not made any instructions.

The third would apply to cases where treatment is serving only to sustain life artificially.

The author of the report, Professor Didier Sicard, stressed that he did not support any measures which "suddenly and prematurely end life."

"We are radically opposed to inscribing [euthanasia](#) in law," Sicard told a press conference.

He also stressed that he was not advocating Swiss-style clinics where people are provided with lethal medication to enable them to end their own lives.

Instead, Sicard said he favoured amendments to a 2005 law which already authorises doctors to administer [painkilling drugs](#) at levels they know will, as a secondary effect, shorten a patient's life.

Sicard's report was drawn up after extensive consultation with the terminally ill and their families which revealed widespread dissatisfaction with a "cure at all costs" culture in the [medical establishment](#).

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Citation: Report recommends France legalise 'accelerated deaths' (2012, December 18) retrieved 6 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2012-12-france-legalise-deaths.html>

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