

Bioethicists challenge doctors' right to refuse care

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In a recent article, the Editors-in-Chief of two leading ethics journals stress that there should be better protections for patients from doctors' personal values as well as more severe restrictions on the right of clinicians to conscientious objection, particularly in relation to assisted dying.

They add that doctors can campaign for policy or legal reform and they can provide advice with reasons based on their values, but they have no claim to special moral status that would permit them to deny patients medical care to which these patients are entitled.

"Conscientious objection cases are hitting the courts in many countries, and it's high time to change the status quo to a situation where patient needs are given clear priority over [doctors'](#) idiosyncratic views of the universe," said Dr. Udo Schuklenk, co-author of the Bioethics article.

"Doctors' subjective moral opinions must not be given greater significance than their professional medical obligations to patients. They promise in their graduation ceremonies that the patient comes always first—it's time to live up to that promise."

More information: Julian Savulescu et al. Doctors Have no Right to Refuse Medical Assistance in Dying, Abortion or Contraception, *Bioethics* (2016). [DOI: 10.1111/bioe.12288](https://doi.org/10.1111/bioe.12288)

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