



Letters to the Editor

Tuesday March 31 2020 | THE TIMES

End-of-life care

Sir, We are concerned that the government must duly consider end-of-life care in its response to the Covid-19 pandemic. From our own clinical experience and knowledge, we share the concerns we are hearing from vulnerable patients, friends and relatives. Many of our vulnerable citizens would prefer a dignified death at home, with loved ones, if there is only a small chance of extending their life by hospital admission. It is perceived that hospital end-of-life care will be lonely and impersonal, by necessity, and some also do not wish to put the hospital service under pressure or deny a ventilator to a patient more likely to benefit.

Should the hospital service be overwhelmed, a community care service should be in place as a safety net, so that patients do not end their lives by dying medically unsupported at home. Failure to implement this will result in suffering, both for the victims and for the survivors of this pandemic. The grief of the bereaved will be made worse by the knowledge that the person they love suffered at the end of their life. We ask the prime minister that absolute priority is given to end-of-life services for people dying from Covid-19 at home.

Dr Lyn Jenkins, retired GP and bereavement support volunteer;
Professor Scott Murray, emeritus professor of primary palliative care, the University of Edinburgh; **Dr Iona Heath**, former president of the Royal College of General Practitioners
Plus a further 14 signatories at thetimes.co.uk/letters