



Life in medicine is rarely quiet, and the summer has seen medics sitting exams, travelling on elective, beginning new jobs, or perhaps contributing to the ever growing #weneedtotalkaboutjeremy conversation on twitter.

A mixture of ethical discord over assisted suicide, an apparent workforce crisis, and growing controversy around the current health secretary have created a media storm, with Jeremy Hunt's comments about weekend working generating a backlash from doctors not seen since the problems with Modernising Medical Careers in the mid-2000s.

News headlines often pass medical students by. Christian students confident that they are following God's calling by studying medicine may feel they don't need to worry about politics and hope to just get on with treating patients.

But I don't believe we can stand by with such important issues at stake. Even the political hot potato of 'seven day working' has justice implications. With the country stacking up ever more national debt, can we really afford a large expansion of routine NHS work at weekends when many claim that the present weekday service is struggling? While such appointments may well be convenient for those who are working and commuting, such patients are *usually* relatively healthy. Should resources really be diverted towards convenience and by implication away from care of other, perhaps more vulnerable patients?

What about the medical workforce? If media reports are to be believed, an increasing number of British doctors are choosing to work overseas. To maintain current services, we are likely to need to 'import' more doctors. It may not be difficult to attract doctors from other parts of the world to work in the UK, but what might the effect be on the under-doctored countries from which they often come?

Assisted suicide is a more obvious issue for Christians to consider. Repeated attempts to legalise assisted suicide in recent years have thankfully been defeated following concerted action across a broad coalition of Christians, disability rights groups and politicians. Labour MP Rob Marris' bill which will receive its second reading as *Nucleus* arrives on your doorstep represents the latest in this series of threats. We hope and pray that it will be quickly defeated – but we can be almost certain that assisted suicide will not go away.

We cannot bury our heads in the sand. Issues in the news have a direct effect on patient care, disproportionately affecting the most vulnerable. Let's make it our business to understand and engage with the wider political world in which we learn and will eventually practise. If we take seriously Jesus' commands to minister to the poor and most vulnerable, we must look not only at the patients we meet day to day, but at the society in which we and they live and work, thinking how we can speak truth and love as debate rages around us. Let's pray that God will enable us to glimpse something of his vision for the society around us, and enable us to share that with those we meet. ■