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## Jehovah's Witness, 22, Dies in Hospital as Mother Stood By

By Ewan Palmer

A lawyer who advised doctors to let a 22-year-old Jehovah's Witness die even though he wanted to live has spoken out about the anguish the situation caused.

Robert Tobin, a partner in the law firm Kennedy's, was called in to an unnamed NHS trust after a Jehovah's Witness suffering from sickle cell anaemia refused a blood transfusion which would have saved his life because of his religious beliefs.

The man, who did not wish to die but was merely upholding his beliefs, gradually deteriorated over the following three weeks before eventually dying. His mother was with him throughout.

**Speaking to the Independent**, Tobin said: "Medical staff were understandably upset at seeing a patient deteriorate before their eyes knowing a simple procedure could have been provided that would have saved his life,

"I don't know what his mother was thinking as she sat by and watched him die. I assume either she felt powerless or she felt bound to her own religious code of conduct which says you can't share blood with others.

"He had full capacity, he made his decision, however irrational. His doctors were bound by that. The rules are very clear."

Tobin highlighted the contrast between the Jehovah's Witness case to that of Tony Nicklinson and other patients who are seeking assistance from doctors to help them die.

Nicklinson suffers from "locked-in syndrome" and is almost completely paralysed after suffering a stroke in 2005.

Nicklinson has taken his case to court in a bid to [let doctors who assist him dying to be spared from prosecution](#).

Tobin points out the clear distinction in the eyes of the law between doctors unable to save someone's life even though the man had no intention of ending his life and doctors assisting in the death of another.

"There is a subtle distinction between a patient's right to life and a patient's right to die," Tobin said.

"It is tragic that his goal was not to die but to ensure that he obeyed what he regarded as his religious commands.

"Death only came about as a consequence of that and not, as with those wishing assistance with dying, as the primary aim."