

The Attitudes of Flemish Palliative-Care Nurses and Physicians towards Euthanasia and Physician Assisted Suicide

Aim of the Study: Several studies have already investigated attitudes of medical professionals towards end-of-life issues. Less research has been conducted concerning the attitudes of palliative care professionals. In 2006 the Interdisciplinary Centre for the Study of Religion and World Views (K.U.Leuven) and the Flemish Federation for Palliative Care undertook a quantitative study of attitudes of palliative care physicians and nurses towards physician assisted suicide, and voluntary and non-voluntary euthanasia.

Method: An anonymous questionnaire was sent to all physicians (147) and nurses (589) employed in palliative care teams and institutions in Flanders (Belgium). The questionnaire contained a demographic part, and an attitudinal part, consisting of a long series of ethical statements using a five-point Likert-scale.

Results: 70.5% of the nurses ($n=415$) and 67.3% of the physicians ($n=99$) responded. Most physicians (66.3%) considered non-voluntary never ethically justified. The statistical analysis of the results will be completed in February 2007. In our analysis we will investigate the relation between attitudes toward voluntary euthanasia, attitudes towards non-voluntary euthanasia and attitudes toward PAS on the one hand and several demographic background variables on the other hand. Provisory analysis has shown that a meaningful factor-cluster-analysis of attitudes towards the end-of-life issues is possible. Results will be compared to available international data.