Author's response to reviews

Title: Life-ending drug use without explicit patient request in general practice in Belgium.

Authors:

Koen Meeussen (koen.meeussen@vub.ac.be)
Lieve Van den Block (lvdblock@vub.ac.be)
Nathalie Bossuyt (Nathalie.Bossuyt@iph.fgov.be)
Michael Echteld (Michael.Echteld@vumc.nl)
Johan Bilsen (johan.bilsen@vub.ac.be)
Luc Deliens (luc.deliens@vub.ac.be)

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Concerning: Submission of manuscript

Life-ending drug use without explicit patient request in general practice in Belgium.

Dear Dr. Norton,

Studies in several European countries have consistently reported that a number of patients die following end-of-life decisions which may, or are intended to, shorten life. The use of drugs by physicians with the intention of ending a patient’s life without his or her explicit request is a practice that has evoked considerable political, ethical and public debate. In-depth empirical research on this controversial practice is nonexistent.

Based on face-to-face interviews with the clinicians involved in cases where patients died following such a decision in general practice in Belgium, we investigated the clinical characteristics of the patients, the decision-making process, and the way the practice was conducted.

The paper is a main paper of the "senti-melc study", a mortality follow-back study on monitoring end-of-life care in a representative sample of patients who died non-suddenly in Belgium. Data were gathered in 2005 and 2006 via collaboration with an existing representative surveillance network of general practitioners.

We submit the paper as an original article to BMC Public Health as we believe it is of great general medical and public value. I kindly refer to the e-mail I received at the 3td of August from BMC Editorial:

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BMC Medicine

Dear Mr Meeussen,

Thank you for your e-mail dated 29/07/09. I can confirm that we would be pleased to consider this manuscript for publication in BMC Public Health instead of BMC Medical Ethics. In order for this to proceed you will have to complete your current submission and then we will transfer this manuscript across to BMC Public Health in-house.

I hope this answers your query, please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any further questions.

Best wishes,
Mick

Mick Aulakh, M.Sc.  
Assistant Editor, BMC Medicine  
BMC-series  
BioMed Central  
Floor 6, 236 Gray's Inn Road  
London, WC1X 8HL
The corresponding author for the article is given in the manuscript and below in this letter. There are no potential conflicts of interest.

We hope to hear from you soon.

Yours sincerely,

Koen Meeussen, on behalf of all co-authors
End-of-Life Care Research Group
Vrije Universiteit Brussel
Laarbeeklaan 103
1090 Brussels – Belgium
email: koen.meeussen@vub.ac.be
Tel +32 2 477 47 49
Fax +32 2 477 47 11