Reviewer’s report

Title: Attitudes on Euthanasia and Cremation in Cyprus: A population-based Survey

Version: 2 Date: 24 February 2013

Reviewer: Hilde M Buiting

Reviewer’s report:

This is a population based study in which Cypriots are surveyed by phone about attitudes towards euthanasia and cremation. The study is conducted in 2007 and the most important result is that Cypriots are rather reluctant towards euthanasia/cremation, especially when they are religious. The data are from 2007 so a little outdated. However, as there is no other study like this conducted in Cyprus the data are nevertheless worthwhile.

Minor comments (essential):

Abstract conclusions.
Could the authors make the conclusion more specific? To me, this doesn’t seem so surprising. Could it be more than religion only; a taboo in society (as there is no definition about euthanasia at all)? A specific aspect of culture in Cyprus?

Introduction.

The authors need to provide a definition of euthanasia in the introduction section / need to specify why they did not give a specific definition of euthanasia in the questionnaire. Throughout the world, the definition of euthanasia varies widely.

I believe the last part of this section has to be elaborated; e.g. the part in which is described that there are no terms about euthanasia/cremation in legislation. What does this mean? How do physicians / lay people define these terms (euthanasia) themselves? I believe this is the most important and innovative part of this study as compared to other studies on euthanasia in other (European) countries.

Methods.

In the questionnaire, the question about euthanasia focusses on two completely different groups: severely ill patients and patients with dementia. This is a limitation of the study. In the Netherlands for instance many people do not agree with euthanasia for patients with (severe) dementia, but they do agree with euthanasia when people are severely ill and suffer unbearably. Please explain already in the methods section why the authors chose for this specific (broad) question.

Results.
Please be clear that if you speak about euthanasia, you refer to euthanasia for severely ill patients as well as euthanasia for patients with dementia throughout the results section.

Discussion.
I think the final paragraph can be stronger. (see also the remarks with respect to the conclusion of the abstract) What does it mean that the percentages are much lower in Cyprus? Is there another factor apart from religion, which may play a role?

In the limitation section: see methods section, the question about euthanasia is a limitation through which comparisons with other studies are more difficult to make. Please mention the response rate of 49% (which is not so high)

Why did the authors only focus on euthanasia and cremation?
It could have been interesting to focus on palliative sedation also (less controversial practice).

Minor comments (discretionary):

Title.
I would suggest to change the title in: attitudes towards euthanasia in severely ill and dementia patients and cremation: a population based telephone survey.

Introduction.
Second paragraph: I don't think an introduction about bioethics is necessary for the message of this paper. For me; it only brings up questions as in what is exactly meant with 'bioethical issues'. I would suggest leaving this out. The same holds for the sentence mentioned in the introduction section later on; please be more concrete and speak for instance about end-of-life decisions.

Third paragraph: There are many different topics which are shortly touched upon. I would suggest focusing little more on one or more topics. I further did not understand the relation of this paragraph with the last sentence; do the majority of Greek physicians not agree with euthanasia because they are religious?

Discussion.
Characteristics such as age and educational level appear to be influential on attitudes also. Please reflect a little bit more upon this.

Euthanasia and cremation are separately described in the discussion section. It could be interesting to compare the attitudes of euthanasia and cremation separately.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable
**Statistical review:** No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests.