Author's response to reviews

Title: The use of opioids at the end of life: a survey of experienced barriers in pain management and knowledge level of physicians

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Author's response to reviews: see over
Dear editor,
Thank you for giving us the opportunity to revise our manuscript again. Below we address the referee’s comments point by point.
Sincerely,
Bregje Onwuteaka-Philipsen

Referee 1.

Thank you for asking me to review the second submission as it is greatly improved.

1. Major compulsory revision.

In discussion about the use of opioids for euthanasia I note that the statement is made that a reduction in the use of opioids for euthanasia may be accompanied by an increase physician knowledge about pain management. This is not backed up by any data and as the study says this is the Netherlands first study of physician knowledge. I think this statement needs removing.

*We removed this statement*

Also the reference stating that attention to palliative care has increased is not a study but a government report. Reference 58 seems an inadequate reference to support the increase in palliative care in the country and if it does include unbiased data then it should be elaborated on more fully.

*We removed the part of the sentence on the increased attention to palliative care and removed reference 58.*

2. Minor Essential Revisions

Spelling mistakes seen.

*We went through the manuscript again and removed some spelling mistakes.*

Discussion section; Hastening the end of life section; paragraph 3, sentence 3 has an error and is missing words. Overall the language is much better and it is more easily readable.

*We thank the referee for his or her attentiveness. The words ‘hasten the end of life’ were missing in the sentence and we added them.*

Referee 3.

Discretionary Revision:

1. "Other experience and attitude questions" instead of “other questions” would be more precise (p. 5, paragraph 3).

*We changed this.*
2. Please provide an argument that the samples were representative for the Netherlands (p.6, paragraph 1).

The samples are representative for the Netherlands because they are randomly taken from registrations consisting of virtually all physicians in the Netherlands. We changed the text to make this more clear:

“The samples were randomly taken from different sources: general practitioners from the Netherlands Institute of Health Services Research (NIVEL), elderly care physicians from the Association of Physicians specialized in care for older people (Verenso) and clinical specialists from the medical address guide (BSL). These registrations consist of virtually all general practitioners, elderly care physicians and clinical specialists in the Netherlands.”

3. Please provide an argument for choosing backwards-stepwise inclusion into the regression model (p.6, paragraph 4).

We provided an argument for choosing backwards-stepwise inclusion:

“The analysis was done backward stepwise until all independent variables had a p<0.0.5 to construct a predictive model.”