Reviewer’s report

Title: News media coverage of euthanasia: a content analysis of Dutch national newspapers

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Reviewer: Phillipa Malpas

Reviewer’s report:

This is an interesting, concise paper that examines how the term ‘euthanasia’ is used in Dutch newspapers, and the arguments given for and against the practice. The paper set out two aims: is the term euthanasia used according to the legal definition within the Netherlands?; and, determine what arguments (for and against) are contained in the newspapers. The articles included regular news reports, letters to the editor, comments and features. The legal definition of euthanasia was clearly articulated in the paper.

Both aims were clearly discussed within the body of the paper.

The various boxes, tables and figures mirror the discussion in the paper and are correctly referenced.

There are no limitations stated in the paper.

Discretionary Revisions:

1) In the discussion section (para 3) euthanasia deaths from 2005 are used (van der Heide A et al), but I wonder why these are referred to when there are more recent data available (Lancet. 2012 Sep 8;380(9845):908-15. Epub 2012 Jul 11. Trends in end-of-life practices before and after the enactment of the euthanasia law in the Netherlands from 1990 to 2010: a repeated cross-sectional survey. Onwuteaka-Philipsen BD, Brinkman-Stoppelenburg A, Penning C, de Jong-Krul GJ, van Delden JJ, van der Heide A)

2) How are the investigated newspapers (n=7) circulated – hard copy, electronic medium, both? Could this be clarified in the ‘methods’ section?

Minor Essential Revisions:

1) Background; para 2, line 7 ‘and the ending the life of severely ill newborns….’, reads rather clumsily. It could read ‘and the ending of life of severely ill newborns….’.

2) Background; para 3, line 6 ‘to investigate to which practices’. The word ‘to’ after investigate needs to be deleted.

3) Discussion; para 1, line 3. The claim that ‘many other countries keep a (sometimes critical) eye on Dutch practices and debates’ needs substantiation. Reference?

4) Reference 18 (Kouwenhoven M, etc al) lacks publication details (volume,
Level of interest: An article of limited interest

Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

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'