Reviewer's report

Title: Factors associated with the rejection of active euthanasia: A survey among the general public in Austria.

Version: 2 Date: 24 January 2013

Reviewer: Maggie Hendry

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Major Compulsory Revisions

This paper reports a survey of members of the Austrian general public regarding their attitudes towards active voluntary euthanasia (AVE). It begins with a set of reasonably well defined research questions; however I find it difficult to assess the reliability of the findings because a number of points relating to the survey instrument and the analysis are unclear:

1. One of the aims of the study was to compare responses depending whether the question about the acceptability of AVE was asked in an abstract way, or using a vignette. Whilst the vignette question is given in full, the abstract question is not; however the authors state that pain is not mentioned in the abstract question whereas it is in the vignette. It does not seem reasonable to make comparisons between responses to the two questions on the basis of the mode of posing the questions, when in fact it appears that the questions themselves are different in at least one respect. Another factor might be the mode of administration; we do not know whether the abstract question specified a lethal injection given by the doctor (as in the vignette). Some people have a different view of the acceptability of this than they do of the patient being prescribed a lethal drug to take themselves.

2. Again because the questions are not given and there are no clues in the background or discussion, I don’t understand the difference between “end of life care experience” and “care of the terminally ill experience”, and there is no indication in either case of the level of care given.

3. In the answer categories, I don’t understand the difference between “accept/approve” and “agree”. To me these are the same. It might be something that would become clear if I knew how the question was framed, or it could be that something is lost in translation, but it definitely needs explanation.

4. In dichotomising the answers to the categories “acceptance” and “rejection”, I could just about accept the rationale for interpreting “undecided” as not outright rejection and including it with acceptance, but I have serious reservations about including “don’t know” in the same group as well.

5. The discussion and conclusion sections might benefit from editing, I found them difficult to follow. I simply didn’t understand the first paragraph of the conclusions, especially the last sentence.
**Level of interest:** An article of limited interest

**Quality of written English:** Not suitable for publication unless extensively edited

**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