Reviewer's report

Title: Physicians' experience with end-of-life decision making: survey in 6 European countries and Australia

Version: 1 Date: 26 November 2007

Reviewer: Akira Akabayashi

Reviewer's report:

General
In this study, a questionnaire was used to survey physicians from six European countries and Australia about the issue of ending treatment for terminal patients and euthanasia. The data itself is of great value. Please review the following comments and revise the manuscript accordingly.

Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

1. More detail is needed about the time period in which the study was conducted, and the method of distributing and collecting the questionnaires.

2. Has this study passed an ethics review committee?

3. Which language was used to create the questionnaire? If multiple languages were used, how were the questionnaires evaluated to ensure that the content was the same?

4. If possible, include the whole questionnaire itself as an appendix.

5. In Figure 1, include the reason that questions about euthanasia were avoided in Italy.

6. In the discussion, the differences in the results between countries are attributed to differences in religion and culture. More discussion is needed, however, to address the differences between these countries in terms of the legal system, government system, and directives of related academic associations with respect to ELD (end of life decision). For instance, in the Netherlands and Belgium, there is legislation regarding EAS.

7. The discussion states that important differences exist not only in physicians’ experiences involving ELD, but also in their attitudes toward the issue. Please explain more specifically what types of “attitudes” are involved.

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of
a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

Typo:
p. 4 line 5 from the bottom: characteristics. attitudes --> characteristics, attitudes
p. 6 line 3 from the bottom: in The Netherlands --> in the Netherlands
p. 13 bottom: (strongly) --> (Strongly)

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Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

Which journal?: Appropriate or potentially appropriate for BMC Medicine: an article of importance in its field

What next?: Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests’