Reviewer's report

Title: The involvement of family in the Dutch practice of euthanasia and physician assisted suicide: a systematic mixed studies review

Version: 0 Date: 15 Dec 2018

Reviewer: Raphael Cohen-Almagor

Reviewer's report:

I read the article with interest. The article revolves around a very important topic and its thesis makes much sense. It has a lot of potential. However, the article requires additional work to make it worthy of publication.

I recommend publication subject to correction of the following problematic concerns. My comments are designed to improve the quality of the article. I hope the authors will attend to them.

The article requires a thorough, painstaking proof-reading by a native English speaker. There are numerous language problems, grammatical errors, clumsy expressions and unclear sentences, to the extent that sometimes it is difficult to understand and guessing is required in order to fathom what the authors had intended to say.

The punctuation can and should be improved.

The authors need to clarify all terms and concepts. For instance, the term family is unclear. Do they mean blood relatives? Is the concept wider than that?

The language is imprecise. The title of the paper may serve as an illustration. The paper is not concerned merely with euthanasia but also with physician-assisted suicide. The paper is not concerned only with "family" but also with other people around the patient's bed.

The literature review is incomplete. Some major literature pieces are missing. They could have contributed and enhance the quality of the article.

The authors speak of "family" when it is not clear that they refer to patient's relatives. At some other times they use the term "intimates" which is an odd term. The authors can use the terms "family and friends"; "the patient's significant others"; "the patient's beloved people"; "patient's loved ones", or "people around the patient's bed" as alternatives.

The majority of the article is descriptive, with little analysis of findings. Far more thinking should be invested in explaining findings (pp. 10-17). For instance, in p. 10, why Dutch physicians invest more in talking to families about end-of-life decisions compared to colleagues in other countries? In p. 11, in what circumstances do family members start a conversation about
EAS for their loved one? In p. 12, why advance directives are rarely carried out? These are only a few examples. The discussion (pp. 17-20) should be far more analytical and perceptive.

Specific comments:

p. 1: Title should capture the locus of research clearly. Define family. Are you referring only to blood relatives?

p. 3, line 46: provide percentages of rates of acceptance over time.

Line 49: comply with.

Box 1 is not visible.


Box 2 is not visible.

pp. 7-8: Language, Punctuation. Numerous grammatical mistakes. These entire pages should be rewritten. It is difficult to read.

Advance directives, not advanced directives.

p. 7, Line 143, for instance: There are descriptions of patients with dementia who made euthanasia advance directives following experiences with parents who were afflicted with dementia.

p. 7, Line 153: Explain ADL.
Are the methods appropriate and well described?
If not, please specify what is required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Does the work include the necessary controls?
If not, please specify which controls are required in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Are the conclusions drawn adequately supported by the data shown?
If not, please explain in your comments to the authors.

Yes

Are you able to assess any statistics in the manuscript or would you recommend an additional statistical review?
If an additional statistical review is recommended, please specify what aspects require further assessment in your comments to the editors.

Not relevant to this manuscript

Quality of written English
Please indicate the quality of language in the manuscript:

Not suitable for publication unless extensively edited

Declaration of competing interests
Please complete a declaration of competing interests, considering the following questions:

1. Have you in the past five years received reimbursements, fees, funding, or salary from an organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this manuscript, either now or in the future?

2. Do you hold any stocks or shares in an organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this manuscript, either now or in the future?

3. Do you hold or are you currently applying for any patents relating to the content of the manuscript?

4. Have you received reimbursements, fees, funding, or salary from an organization that holds or has applied for patents relating to the content of the manuscript?

5. Do you have any other financial competing interests?

6. Do you have any non-financial competing interests in relation to this paper?
If you can answer no to all of the above, write 'I declare that I have no competing interests' below. If your reply is yes to any, please give details below.

I declare that I have no competing interests

I agree to the open peer review policy of the journal. I understand that my name will be included on my report to the authors and, if the manuscript is accepted for publication, my named report including any attachments I upload will be posted on the website along with the authors' responses. I agree for my report to be made available under an Open Access Creative Commons CC-BY license (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/). I understand that any comments which I do not wish to be included in my named report can be included as confidential comments to the editors, which will not be published.

I agree to the open peer review policy of the journal