

Poster presentation

Medical students' attitudes on euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide: sex differences

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Background

Data available among medical students, on euthanasia (EUT) and physician-assisted suicide (PAS) are scarce. The aim of this study is to establish differences in attitudes on EUT and PAS between men and women final year medical students in Athens.

Material and Methods

We translated, adapted and modified, in a short version, the questionnaire developed by Ganzini on EUT and PAS. The Greek version of the questionnaire consisted of 26 items. Consecutive series of final year medical students completed the questionnaire in the presence of members of the research team. The survey was anonymous.

Results

251 students (55% women) completed the questionnaire. Their mean age was 24.7 (± 1.8) years. 52 % and 70% of the respondents were for the acceptance of EUT or PAS, respectively. There were no statistically significant differences between men and women in most of the parameters studied. However, more men than women were in favor of the view that PAS may be morally acceptable under circumstances (65% vs 57%, $p = 0.03$) and that a request for PAS from a terminally ill patient is evidence of existence of a mental disorder (27% vs 13%, $p = 0.01$). In contrast, more women than men strongly agreed that religious belief deter physicians from facilitating a patient's death (43% vs 33%, $p = 0.003$) and that, the risk that PAS might be misused with certain disadvantaged groups could influence the respondent view on the issues of EUT or PAS (98% vs 92%, $p = 0.01$).

Discussion

Gender is considered as a factor differentiating attitudes on EUT and PAS among final year medical students.