

Awareness and perception towards euthanasia among students of Arts and Science College

Khan F^{1*}, Pramod K L²

¹Tutor, ²Curator, Department of Forensic Medicine and Toxicology, Yenepoya Medical College, Deralakatte, Mangalore, 575018.

Email: firdousdr786@gmail.com

Abstract

Objective: To study the awareness and perception about euthanasia among arts and science students in Mangalore.

Method: The cross-sectional study was conducted at different colleges at Mangalore among 250 Arts and Science students. **Result:** The students responded completely to the self-administered questionnaires that comprised of ten questions. Out of 100(40%) of students were against introducing a law permitting the practice of euthanasia. The majority of students 190 (76%) were of the opinion that it can be allowed in certain cases. 116 (46%) students were not sure whether terminally sick patients should have the option to request a lethal medication to die, while 77 (31%) were against it. Majority of the students 137 (55%) were of the opinion that euthanasia should be decided by the doctor. The main concern of respondents 161 (65%), surrounding euthanasia was that it can be misused in different situation. **Conclusion:** The awareness of euthanasia was adequate but a small number of students were against it. Euthanasia should be a part behaviour science module at undergraduate level so that the awareness will be more. Further study should be conducted to know the awareness and perception of euthanasia among the general population.

Key Words: Awareness, Euthanasia, Perception, Arts and Science students.

*Address for Correspondence:

Dr. Firdous Khan, IIIrd Year Post Graduate, Department of Forensic Medicine and Toxicology, Yenepoya Medical College, Deralakatte, Mangalore, 575018.

Email: firdousdr786@gmail.com

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INTRODUCTION

Advances in medicine, medical technology and its ability to postpone death of a terminally ill patient have, led to the controversial issue of euthanasia. Euthanasia is a practice of granting a painless death to person suffering from painful and incurable illness or from debilitated physical disorder. Euthanasia is further divided into active or passive¹. Worldwide the acceptance of euthanasia is increasing particularly in countries like United States, Australia, and India however Islamic countries are still reluctant to the idea of euthanasia based on their religious beliefs². Euthanasia was mentioned by Hippocrates

between 400 and 300 B.C in the Hippocratic Oath. The original Oath states: "To please no one will prescribe a deadly drug nor give advice which may cause his death." According to Hippocrates the duty of a doctor is to relieve the pain and suffering of his patient on one hand and protect and prolong the life of the patient on the other hand³. Oregon was the only US state that allowed PAS for several years, but in 2009 PAS was also permitted in states of Washington and Montana⁴. Passive euthanasia has been recognized by law in France in November 2004. Switzerland accepts patients from different countries for the termination of life according to the wish of the patient. Euthanasia is legalized in Holland, Belgium and Luxembourg. Uruguay has approved the "right to die" and physician assisted suicide is legalized in Switzerland and Germany, whereas all types of euthanasia are illegal and punishable in Greece⁵. In India passive euthanasia was permitted by the Supreme court (in the year 2009), after the Aruna Shanbaug case in certain situations, either on the request of the parents or the spouse or other close relatives, however active euthanasia of patient suffering from acute disease was considered illegal⁶. There has been increase in studies on perception of people regarding euthanasia. These studies are focussing more on the

perception of medical students, however engaging the arts and science students in discussion on euthanasia and their perspective to the same has been lacking. Hence this study is taken up with the goal of understanding perception of arts and science students towards euthanasia.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

A cross sectional study was carried out at different colleges in Mangalore Dakshin Kannada (Karnataka) with a sample size of 250 students including both female and male students, using convenient sampling method between the age range of 17 to 22 years, to assess the knowledge and attitude among science and arts students towards euthanasia. Questionnaire was anonymised, used to collect information on gender, age, religion and attitude of respondents toward euthanasia. The respondents were asked to state that whether they are for or against the concept of euthanasia. Information was also sought on the reasons for approving or disapproving euthanasia. Data was collected through validated self-administered, structured questionnaire prepared by studying the literature and the content of the questionnaire was validated by three experts. All the respondents were briefed about the study before administering the questionnaire and written consent was also taken for participating in the study. P value of less than 0.05 was taken as significant using the formula $n = Z\alpha^2Pq/d^2$ where P is the Proportion of students in favour of euthanasia, d is the difference and $Z\alpha = 1.96$

RESULTS

A total of 250 students participated in the study belonging to different Arts and Science Colleges in Mangalore.

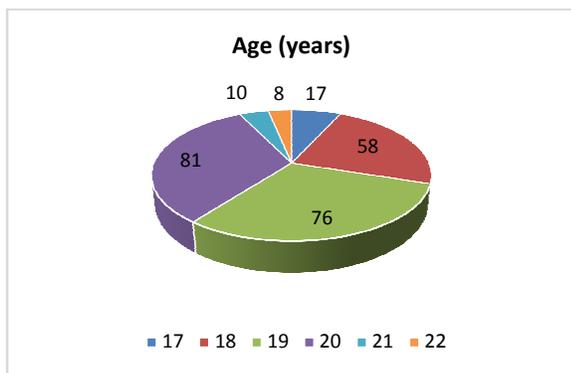


Figure 1: Graphical presentation of age

Students from first year to final year, belonging to age group of 17 to 22 years were included in the study and majority of students 33% belonged to 20 years of age and least 7% were of 17 years.

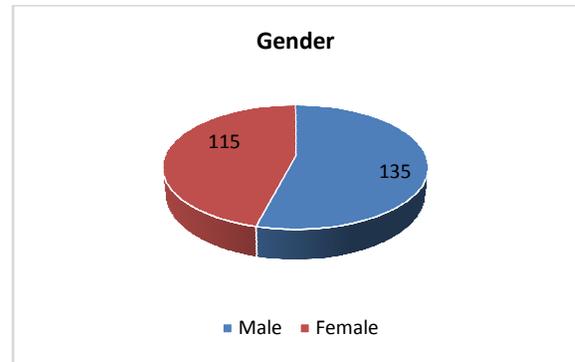


Figure 2: Graphical presentation of gender

Out of 250 students who participated in the study 135 (54%) were male and 115 (46%) were female.

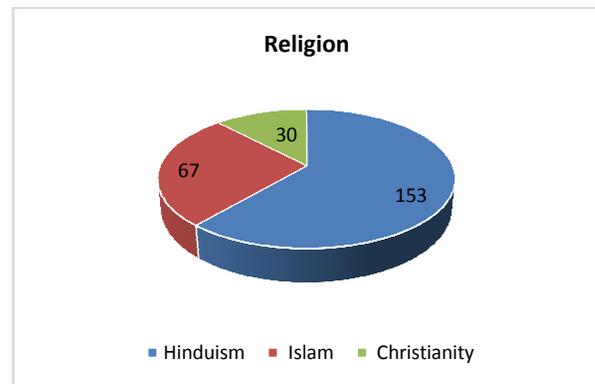


Figure 3: Graphical presentation of religion

Out of 250 students 61% were Hindus, 27% Muslims and 12% were Christians.

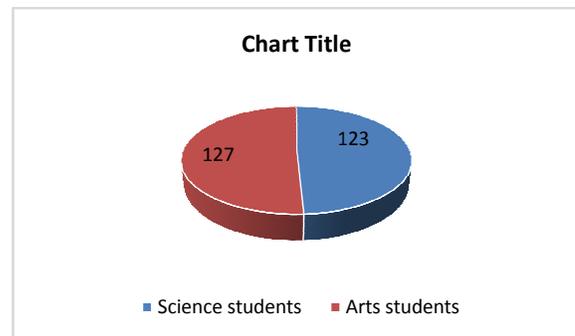


Figure 4: Graphical presentation of science and arts students

A total of 250 students participated in the study out of which 51% belonged to the Arts stream and 49% belonged to the science stream.

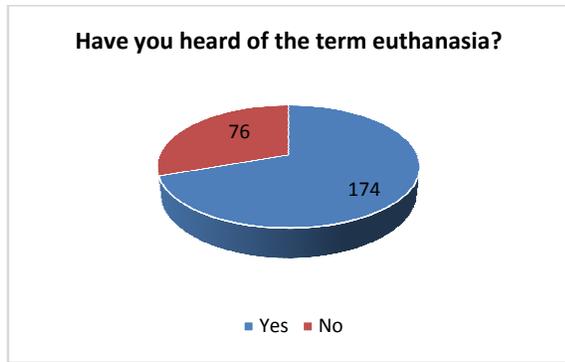


Figure 5: Graphical presentation of question 1

When asked about the knowledge of euthanasia, the majority of students 174 (70%) knew about it.

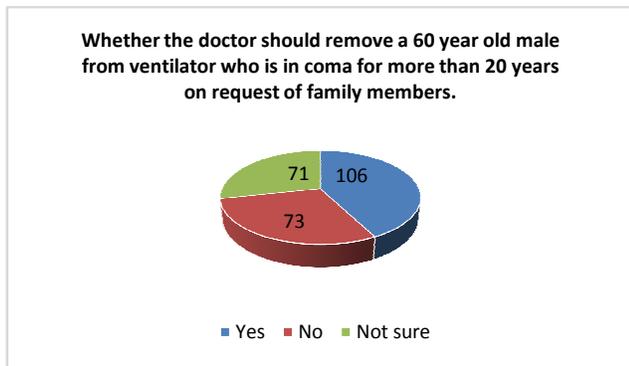


Figure 6: Graphical presentation of question 2

In response to a query asking whether the doctor should remove a 60 year old male from ventilator on the request of family members, 106 (42%) students were in favour of it while 73 (30%) were against it and 71 (28%) were not sure.

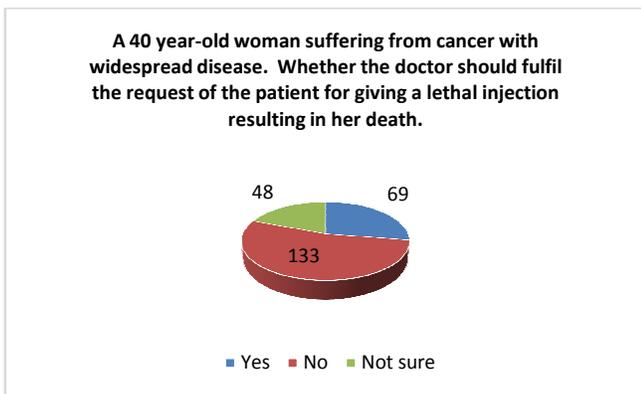


Figure 7: Graphical presentation of question 3

When asked whether a hopelessly ill patient suffering from cancer with widespread disease should be given a lethal dose on her request to end the suffering, 133 (53%) students disagreed while 69 (28%) agreed and 48 (19%) were not sure.

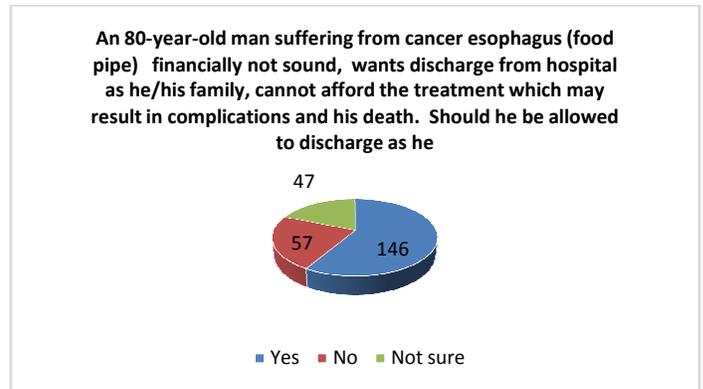


Figure 8: Graphical presentation of question 4

Concerning whether a patients suffering from cancer esophagus, financially not sound and cannot afford the treatment should be allowed discharge from hospital, 146 (58%) students were in favour of it.

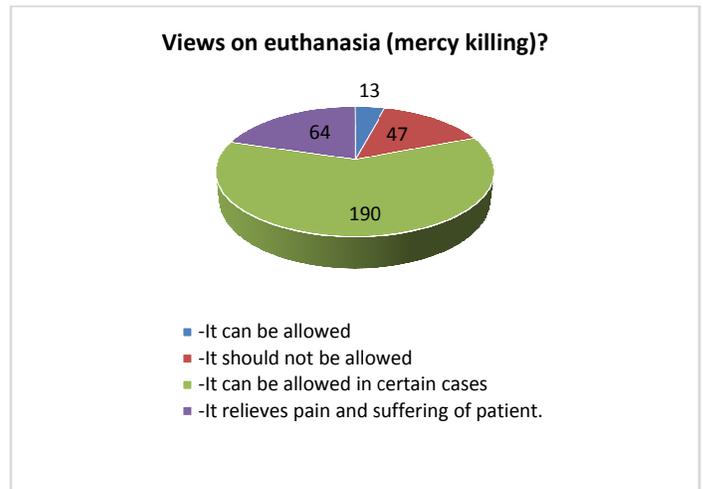


Figure 9: Graphical presentation of question 5

When asked about their views on euthanasia, 190 (76%) students were of the opinion that it can be allowed in certain cases while 47 (19%) were of the opinion that it should not be allowed and 13(5%) believed that it can be allowed.

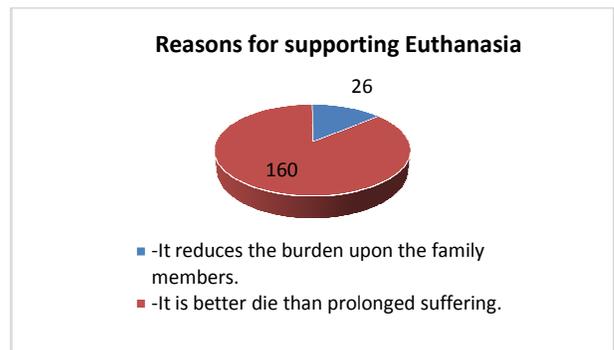


Figure 10: Graphical presentation of question 6

When asked for reason supporting euthanasia 160 (64%) believed that it is better to die than prolonged suffering while 64 (26%) were of the opinion that it relieves pain and suffering of the patient and 26 (10%) believed that it reduces the burden upon the family members.

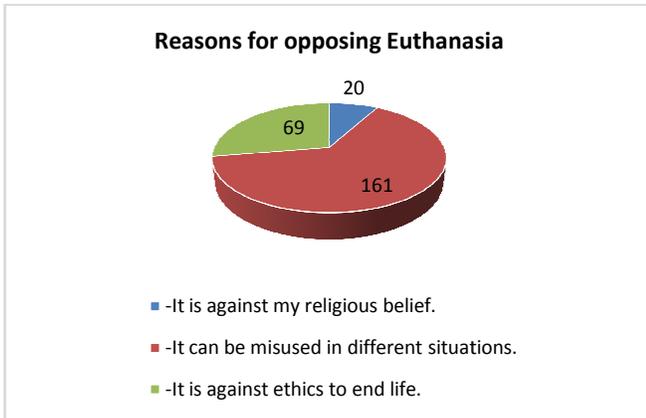


Figure 11: Graphical presentation of question 7

Reasons for opposing euthanasia were asked and it was found that 161 (65%) believed that it can be misused in different situation while 69 (27%) were of the opinion that it is against ethics to end life and for 20 (8%) students believed that it was against their religious belief.

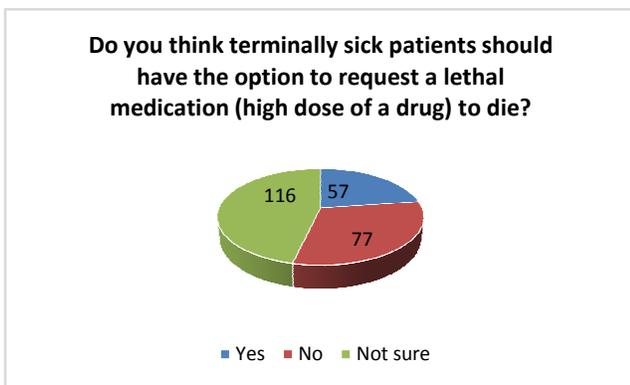


Figure 12: Graphical presentation of question 8

Whether the terminally sick patients should have the option to request a lethal medication to die, 116 (46%) were not sure while 77 (31%) were against it and 57 (23%) were in favour of it.

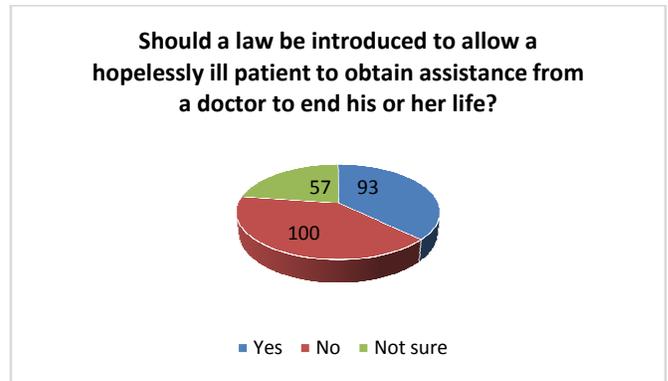


Figure 13: Graphical presentation of question 9

When asked if a law permitting the practice of euthanasia should be introduced, 100 (40%) were against it while 93 (37%) were in favour of it and 57 (23%) were not sure.

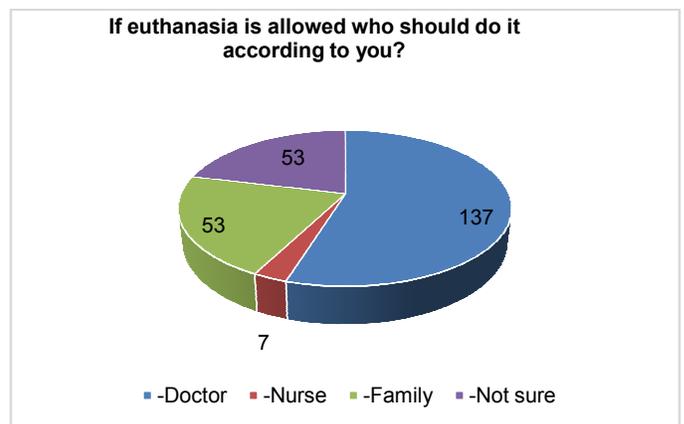


Figure 14: Graphical presentation of question 10

When asked, if euthanasia is allowed who should do it, 137 (55%) were of the opinion that it should be decided by the doctor while 53(21%) believed that it should be decided by the family and 7 (3%) were of the opinion that it should be decided by the nurse.

DISCUSSION

Most studies have be carried out on medical students or doctors and nurses therefore this study is an attempt to know the knowledge and attitude of arts students towards euthanasia.

Table 1: Shows the present study and its comparison with other Authors

Sr. No	Author	Year	Subject and Place	Result
1	Hassan W	2012	493 Medical students at Ziauddin University from the private sector and the Dow University from the public sector.	82% agreed for PAS and 52% for palliative care. 54% disagreed for lethal dose and 58% for an introduction of a law for euthanasia. 63% disagreed based on their religious belief.
2	Rathor MY	2014	International Islamic University Malaysia. 250 physician and 812 patients.	Did not support active euthanasia/ PAS. Supported passive euthanasia.
3	Nick A	2014	599 Greek student nurses	Against euthanasia based of personal belief or department protocol.
4	Present study	2015	250 students from Arts and Science colleges in Mangalore.	100 (40%) of students were against the legalization of euthanasia. 190 (76%) students were of the opinion that it can be allowed in certain cases.

This study suggested that majority of students have adequate knowledge regarding euthanasia. Majority 190 (76%) of students were of the opinion that it can be allowed in certain cases. 116 (46%) students were not sure whether terminally sick patients should have the option to request a lethal medication to die, while 77 (31%) were against it. Majority of the students 137 (55%) were of the opinion that euthanasia should be decided by the doctor. The main concern of respondents 161 (65%), surrounding euthanasia was that it can be misused in different situation. In another study conducted on medical students in both private and public sector in Pakistan it was found that 82% agreed for PAS and 52% for palliative care, 54% disagreed for lethal dose and 58% for an introduction of a law for euthanasia and 63% disagreed based on their religious belief. In a study conducted on 599 Greek student nurses it was found that majority of students have low knowledge regarding euthanasia and were against euthanasia based of their personal belief or department protocol.

CONCLUSION

The awareness of euthanasia was adequate but a small number of students were against it as they believed as it can be misused in different situations. Majority of students were of the opinion that it can be allowed in certain cases whereas students were against the legalisation of euthanasia. Euthanasia should be a part

behaviour science module at undergraduate level so that the awareness will be more. Further study should be conducted to know the awareness and perception of euthanasia among the general population.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

1. Convenience sampling was used which is not better than probability sampling.
2. Sample size is small.

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