Medical Assistance in Dying (MAID) – 'Putting a value on human life and right to die"

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Abstract

Background: The legalization of medical assistance in dying (MAID) represents a historic change in Canadian society following the passing of Bill C-14, in June 2016. The act's amendments allow eligible persons to receive medical assistance in dying (MAID) under specific circumstances. The debate preceding this legislation largely focused on the perspectives of physicians and the general public. However, insight from nursing perspectives were left unexplored. The aim of this study is to explore registered nurses' attitudes and philosophical perspectives of MAID in providing care for someone choosing MAID, whether directly aiding, providing supportive care, or declining to participate and the potential legal and psychological risks associated with MAID. **Methodology**: This study used qualitative (grounded theory) approach. Twenty participants were interviewed using semi-structured questions by phone. The individual interview was audio-recorded with the permission of the participants and transcribed per verbatim by trained research assistants. A synthesis technique for grounded theory data analysis was used to analyze the data. This synthesis technique was derived from the works of four grounded theorists (Kathy Charmaz, Mark Chesler, Juliet Corbin and Anselm Strauss). **Findings**: Six themes describe nurse's attitudes and philosophical perspectives on how participating in, or declining to participate in MAID will shape their clinical nursing practice, and the personal impact; putting a value on human life; maintaining dignity and control at end of life: easy way out of suffering and as a backup option; a new path of the palliative care continuum; death and dying (new bereavement process); ethical challenges (family against patients wishes, conscientious objection). **Implications for Nursing Practice**: Many nurses verbalized their conflicting beliefs and values and how the sacredness of human life is at the heart of tensions related to this legislation. It is important for our healthcare system and governing bodies to address current gaps and inconsistencies in the quality and availability of palliative care. Nurses also have voiced the need for the development of clear guidelines or policies on nurse's roles in directly aiding, providing supportive care, or declining to participate in MAID process. Providing education and training to ensure nurses feel comfortable, confidence and competence to engage with patients seeking for MAID.

Recent Publications (Selected Publication)

Oranye, N., Wallis, B., Ahmad, N. & Aguilar, Z. (2017) Workers' experience with work-related musculoskeletal disorder and worker's perception of organizational policies and practices. International Journal of Workplace Health Management 10(1):69-83.

Ahmad, N., Oranye. N. & Danilov, A. (2016). Rasch Analysis of Stamp's Index of work Satisfaction in Nursing population. Journal of Nursing Open, 1-9. DOI: 10.1002/nop2.61

Oranye, N., Arumugam, U., Ahmad, N. & Arumugam, M. (2016). Perceived Training Needs of Nurses Working with Mentally Ill Patients. Journal of Contemporary Nurse, 1-12. DOI: 10.1080/10376178.

Oranye, N. Ezeah, P.& Ahmad, N. (2016). Elements of Social Capital and Academic Performance of Undergraduate Students. Journal of Social Indicator Research, 1-15. DOI: 10.1007/s11205

Ahmad, N. & Oranye, N. O. (2010) Empowerment, Job Satisfaction and Organizational Commitment: A comparative analysis of nurses working in Malaysia and England, Journal of Nursing Management, 18, 582-591.

Biography

Dr. Ahmad has more than 20 years' experience in the nursing profession. She has significant nursing experience working with diverse population internationally. She has expertise in research areas of workplace empowerment, psychometric evaluation, health management, policies and guideline development and palliative care. Dr. Ahmad has conducted a variety of research studies and published several peer reviewed articles. Her expertise in quantitative and mixed methods designs, provides a concrete methodological foundation for many studies. In 2016, Dr. Ahmad developed a model of Empowerment in Healthcare Organization to promote innovations in healthcare organizations. Investigating the principles underlying the complexity of nursing workforce issues and implementation of guidelines and policies is the goal of her future research.

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