Background and Aim: Euthanasia is an important issue in human ethic that medical students may be confronted with this in their clinical courses. Study about attitude of medical students about euthanasia in Iran is very limited. In present study, we examined attitude of Iranian medical student about euthanasia. Methods: Study performed in Qazvin, Iran after obtaining ethic code from medical ethic committee of Qazvin University of medical science. For this study, all medical students who were studying in Qazvin University of medical science in time of study performing invited. Data were collected with using a self-designed demographics characteristics check list and Euthanasia Attitude Scale. Data analysis performed by using SPSS software. P value under 0.05 considered significant in data analysis. Results: Totally 141 students completed questionnaires. Female students in our study were majority (69.5%). Mean age of students in present study were 20.8±1.76 year. The student’s total score on the Euthanasia Attitude Scale were 59.1±6.1. The student’s mean score on the ethical consideration, practical consideration, treasuring life and naturalistic beliefs categories were 31.4±4.4, 7.7±1.9, 13.8±1.9 and 5.9±1.3 respectively. We note found and significant relationship and correlation between total score on the Euthanasia Attitude Scale and participants demographics characteristics. Conclusion: Majority of participant in our study have neutral attitude towards euthanasia. It seems that we need to further study in this regards.

Key words: Ethical issue, end of life, euthanasia, students, health, Iran

INTRODUCTION

Nowadays with increasing end stage patients life span because of medical science improvement in several fields, health care team members confronted with more ethical and moral challenges in time of treatment and caring of these patients [1, 2, 3]. One of this ethical issue is euthanasia [1, 4]. The term of euthanasia derived from Greek words [5, 6]. Based on the how euthanasia is administered for a patients, it's divided to the three types, active, passive and assisted suicide [7, 8, 8]. In active euthanasia, health care members usually physician or nurses have active role in patients dying, in passive euthanasia health care members usually physician and nurses are not active and they not doing any lifesaving action for their patients and in assisted suicide, health care members usually physician or nurses help patients committing a suicide [9, 10]. In the other division, euthanasia divided to voluntary and nonvoluntary types [11]. Nowadays some type of euthanasia is legal in some European and American countries such as Belgium, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Canada, Colombia, and some states of United State [12].

Because euthanasia is an important issue in human ethic, several studies in medical and nursing field performed to examine attitude toward euthanasia among health care members [13]. In one study in 2014, Rathor and colleagues surveyed physician’s attitude about euthanasia in an Asian country, Malaysia. Sample in Rathor and colleagues study were 192 physicians that work in different health care setting. Most participants in Rathor and colleagues study were Muslims (131 from 192). Majority of participants in Rathor and colleagues study were disagreeing with euthanasia. They also were disagreeing with legalization of euthanasia in their country [13]. In other study in this regards, Terkamo-Moisio and colleagues examined nurse’s attitude about euthanasia in Finland. A high number of nurses in Terkamo-Moisio and colleagues study were agree with legislation of euthanasia and euthanasia be a part of their healthcare system [14]. In one study in Iran, Naseh and colleagues examined attitude of final years nursing students towards different type of euthanasia. Sample in their study were 80 nurse students studying in Islamic Azad University in Shahrekord. Results of Naseh and colleagues study were interesting because about 49% of participant in their study have positive attitude towards euthanasia [15].
RESULTS

Totally 141 students completed questionnaires. Female students in our study were majority (69.5%). Mean age of students were 20.8±1.76 years. About 90% of students in our study were single and most of them reported that have moderate level of economic status. All participants in our study were Muslims. Of 141 students, 57.4%, 41.1% and 1.4% have good, moderate and bad relationship with their religion.

The student's total score on the Euthanasia Attitude Scale were 59.±6.1. The student’s mean score on the ethical consideration, practical consideration, treasuring life and naturalistic beliefs categories showed in graph 1.

Graph 1: Mean score of four domains of Euthanasia Attitude Scale

Although previous studies in Iran and other Asian countries showed similar finding, however study among medical students in European countries showed different finding. In one study in this regards, Mierzecki and colleagues examined attitude toward euthanasia in first year medical students from Szczecin, Germany and Sweden. Majority of medical students in Mierzecki and colleagues study were agreed with euthanasia. In this regards, 3% of German students, 12% of Swedish students and 29% of Poles students were disagree with euthanasia that is difference with finding of our study [22]. This difference could be related to difference in cultural background and religious beliefs between medical students in our study and medical students in Mierzecki and colleagues. It seems that students with strongest religious beliefs are mostly disagreeing with euthanasia. Although we need to further investigation in this regards.

CONCLUSION

Euthanasia is multi-dimensional concept that not accepted by Islam laws. Also in Iranian society because of specific cultural situation and lack of clear laws discussion about euthanasia is very difficult. In present study, we examined attitude of medical students about euthanasia. According to finding of our study, most participants in our study have neutral attitude towards this ethical issue. It seems that we need to further study in this regards among medical students with different cultural and religious belief. We also need to further study to determine role of religious belief in attitude towards euthanasia among Muslims medical students.

Limitation

Sampling methods in our study have some limitation. Also most participants in our study were Muslims that should be considered by readers.

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