

Abstract

Original Paper

Euthanasia: a Healthcare Debate from a Greek-Turkish Perspective

Dimitris Theofanidis, MSc, PhD

Clinical Professor, Nursing Department, School of Health Sciences, ATEI, Thessaloniki, Greece.

Fatma Mecek, BSc(c)

Nurse student, Department of Nursing, Health Sciences Faculty, Yeditepe University, Istanbul, Turkey.

Correspondence: Dimitris Theofanidis, Clinical Assistant Professor, ATEITH, Thessaloniki, Greece E-mail: dimitrisnoni@yahoo.gr

Abstract

Introduction: The meaning of euthanasia comes from Greek literature which means ‘good death’ and has deep historical roots. Euthanasia is also known as mercy killing or physician assisted suicide.

Aim: To review systematically and compare literature in order to unfold differences and similarities between Turkey and Greece on health care policies, legislation, professional and societal views on euthanasia.

Methods: Articles accessed from MEDLINE/PubMed and IATROTEK and some ‘grey literature’ were used as the backbone of this critical account.

Results: *Euthanasia in Greece:* According to Greek law, euthanasia is unlawful. Those who intentionally decide to kill a patient with an incurable disease, on mercy grounds, would be facing punishment. The Christian majority in Greece believes that killing someone intentionally even if terminally-ill, is unethical and legally wrong, even the patient wants to end his/her life. *Euthanasia in Turkey:* In contemporary Turkey, religion is still one of the most important factors determining society's attitude towards euthanasia despite the sects and tariqas following different manner or creeds in Islam. Thus, human life is regarded as sacred and terminating it, even if requested by the patient or guardian, due to severe deformity or hopelessness of the condition is wrong.

Discussion: In both the Muslim faith and Christianity, God creates life and the person has a duty to preserve his/her life. This is also the obligation of health care professionals who are expected to do everything in their power to sustain the patient's life. Also as suicide is considered as a sin in both religions, the concept of assisted euthanasia is thought to be equal to suicide. Due to the above reasons, traditional Christian and Muslim attitudes oppose euthanasia.

Conclusions: Both Turkey and Greece do not allow euthanasia, yet it is practiced covertly by some health care personnel. Yet, despite different religions the attitudes towards euthanasia in Greece and Turkey are similar thus, the two neighbours could learn from each other by initiating open discussions on the management of this highly sensitive topic in order to so that covert euthanasia is substituted by clear professional guidelines and much needed updated legislation.

Key words: euthanasia; mercy killing; assisted suicide