

Objective

Physician assisted suicide (PAS) for adults has been gaining support in the United States (US). Recent studies suggest that up to 13% of families consider ending their terminally ill child's life prematurely. The goal of this study was to assess the impact of pediatric clinician background on the perspective and understanding of the practice Adolescent Physician Assisted Suicide (APAS). This study hypothesized there was significant clinician interest in APAS and their background influenced their position.

Study Design

Pediatric clinicians in 13 divisions at a quaternary medical center prospectively responded to a survey and evaluated a case study about APAS. Responses were statistically evaluated.

Results

Seventy-nine pediatric clinicians aged 29-65 years responded from approximately 500 that were queried. Forty-six, including 11 general pediatricians and 31 subspecialists completed the case-study and 34 finished the survey. 52.4% felt APAS should be legal and 42.9% said APAS was needed. Of the cohort, 7.1% noted they previously had been requested to discuss APAS 1-5 times. There was no statistical difference of responses based on specialty, years of practice, experience, or religion on perspectives of legalization or use of APAS. 84.8% felt religious background was important regarding APAS, however only 19% would discuss it with patients.

Conclusions

A slight majority of pediatric clinicians support APAS though it is rarely being requested in clinical practice. Although there was no significant difference amongst variables,

approaches likely vary and data suggests clinicians require additional training.

Clinicians feel religion is important during end-of-life decision making, but infrequently discuss it.