

Callousness and Apathy towards research - time to change

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Madam, Euthanasia is an old ethical dilemma in the field of medicine that has risen as an important controversy in the past decade or so.¹ It may be defined as "a deliberate intervention undertaken with the express intention of ending a life, to relieve intractable pain".¹ The controversy over euthanasia has brought up many debates ranging from its definition to its associated legal aspects. Some countries have declared it legal for the economic and other benefits associated with it especially "the right to die with honour", whereas others have passed laws against it.² Pakistan has no laws regarding not only euthanasia but also many other similar medical issues including organ donation.

Knowing an issue through scientific method is vital for a rational solution of a problem.³ A study was designed to know "knowledge, attitudes, and practices regarding euthanasia among doctors in a Cancer Hospital in Pakistan". An official permission was taken from the hospital administration and a self-administered questionnaire made by the investigators was given to 32 doctors of the hospital after formal written informed consent. After 30 days and a number of reminders, only five participants returned the filled in questionnaire.

Though euthanasia is a controversial issue and may be more sensitive in a religious country like Pakistan, it is a

big dilemma for health care professionals. Such a low response rate of the participants in this study cannot be explained with the study tool factor like a difficult, time-consuming questionnaire. Nor can it be explained with the feeling of insecurity with the issue as the questionnaire has a clear statement "your answers cannot be held against you". Furthermore, the practices part was optional. The response rate rather shows a general apathy towards the process of research.

Such a mindset has translated into miserable failure of public health in Pakistan. The field of health sciences research has performed very poorly in most of the developing countries including Pakistan thus serving as more of a consumer of research than its producer.⁴ Indigenous health sciences research and change of immature attitude towards health is imperative to find novel, efficacious, and cost-effective answers to the local health care issues and also for policy making.

References

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