



Universitat de Lleida
Facultat d'Infermeria
i Fisioteràpia



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The Role of Nurses in Euthanasia Beyond Legislation: A Scoping Review

Filip Bellon, Jose Tomas Mateos Garcia, Roland Pastells Peiró, Gemma Espigares Tribó, Montserrat Gea Sánchez, Esther Rubinat Arnaldo



Statement of possible conflicts

- ▶ The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare in relation to the presentation
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Introduction

- ▶ Euthanasia is the deliberate act aimed at ending a person's life painlessly and easily, at one's own explicit demand, when one is afflicted with an untreatable illness or unbearable suffering
- ▶ Euthanasia is a controversial ethical topic that has been widely discussed
- ▶ Euthanasia was pioneered by countries such as the Netherlands (2001) and Belgium (2002), and progressively implemented in Luxembourg (2009), Colombia (2015), Canada (2016), the state of Victoria in Australia (2017), and New Zealand (2021)
 - ▶ Most recent approval of the Organic Law on the regulation of euthanasia was passed on March 24, 2021, in Spain
- ▶ The provision of euthanasia involves a multidisciplinary health care team where nurses often have a secondary role
 - ▶ However, nurses play a key role in all healthcare processes.
- ▶ As currently more countries are regulating or considering the inclusion of euthanasia as a healthcare service, there is an urgent need of defining the nurses' share and roles in this process.



General objective

- ▶ This review aims to define the role and scope of nurses within the global context of the euthanasia process by reviewing international legislations and scientific literature.
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Methodology



- ▶ Scoping review according to the Arksey and O'Malley (2005) methodology
- ▶ Search strategy
 - ▶ Mesh Terms : Nurses, Nursing, and euthanasia / combined with free text words
 - ▶ Medline (Pubmed)
 - ▶ Scopus
 - ▶ CinahlPlus
 - ▶ ISIWoS
 - ▶ PsychInfo
 - ▶ Embase
 - ▶ The legislative documents in force at the time of the review were retrieved from the official web portals of these countries
 - ▶ April 2021



Methodology



➤ **Inclusion criteria**

- Research studies reporting the roles of nurses in the process of euthanasia
- Full text articles from 1992 onwards
- Written in English, Spanish, French, Dutch or Portuguese

➤ **Exclusion criteria**

- Studies reporting opinion/reflection about potential nursing roles

Methodology

➤ Study selection

- Rayyan tool
- Peer review process
 - Title and abstract
 - Full - text
- In case of discrepancies: third researcher

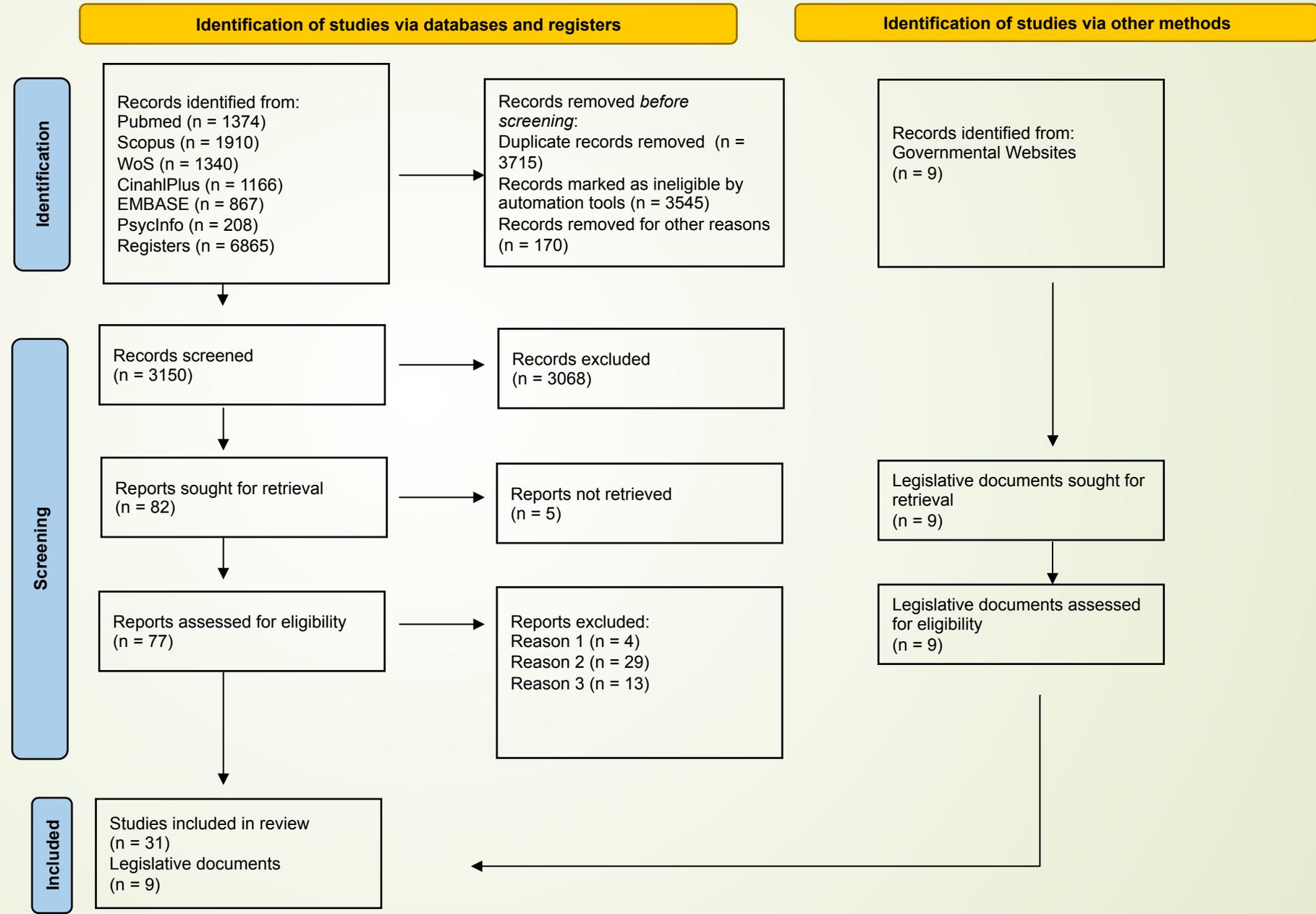
➤ Data extraction

- Data extraction for narrative synthesis by peer review process
 - Two authors independently
- Adapted data collection form for information of interest



rayyan
INTELLIGENT SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

Results





Results

➤ **Included studies**

- 31 studies included
- Published between 1994 and 2021
- Cross sectional studies (42%), literature reviews (30%), qualitative studies (25%) and 1 case study
- Belgium, Canada, The Netherlands, USA, Australia, Spain, or multiple countries

➤ **Included legislation**

- Canada, The Netherlands, Belgium, Luxemburg, Colombia, State of Victoria, New Zealand, and Spain

Results

► Legislation

COUNTRY	RECEIPT	EVALUATION	PROCEDURE	REPORT
Canada	X	X	X	X
Netherlands				
Belgium		X*		
Luxembourg		X*		
Colombia				
Victoria (AU)	X*	X*		
New Zealand		X*	X	X
Spain		X		

X=explicitly stated X*= ambiguously stated

Results

➤ Scientific literature

- we identified 15 roles and 80 tasks that nurses assumed in the process of euthanasia

➤ A. Initial care and accompaniment

- The moment of receiving the request
- Prior accompaniment

➤ C. Procedure for assistance in dying

- Preparation and administration of lethal drug
- Pre-and post-mortem care to patient and family members

➤ B. Evaluation of the patient's condition

- Multidisciplinary approach
- Nurses were consulted as key professionals

➤ D. Debriefing and notification

- No nursing role identified for notifying health authority
- Evaluation of procedure



Results

- ▶ **E. Overarching role in the process**
 - ▶ Coordination and communication with team
 - ▶ Social responsibility and respect for patient and family members
- 

Discussion

➤ Main findings

- This review uncovered different key roles and tasks nurses perform
- Demonstrates lack of regulation of nursing roles in euthanasia
- Figure of nurses is invisible or greyed among healthcare team
- Except for the Canadian Law

➤ Previous surveys highlighted:

- Common for nurses to participate in administration of lethal drug
- Nurses are regularly confronted with patients 'suffering
- Nurses are been excluded from policy discussions regarding implantation of euthanasia
- Nurses generally consider themselves capable of discussing a request of euthanasia with patient
- Religious beliefs, other alternatives as optimal palliative care, advanced treatment, legal responsibilities are main reasons why nurses have negative attitude towards euthanasia



Conclusion



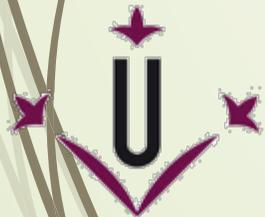
- ▶ This review contributes to the ongoing debate on euthanasia by mapping the different nursing roles and tasks during the euthanasia process
- ▶ Extensive variety of nursing roles have been identified, most of which are situated outside the legal framework, or open to interpretation, as nursing roles are not specially stated
- ▶ This review may provide a scientific framework for policymakers and countries to shape the implementation of euthanasia
- ▶ Future research should focus on the position of nurses and the management of moral, ethical, and educational aspects that protect the professional competencies of nurses and guarantee universal access for patients



Thank you very much for your attention

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