

EMOTIONAL IMPACT OF EUTHANASIA ON VETERINARY MEDICINE STUDENTS: A CROSS-SECTIONAL STUDY

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RESUMO

Euthanasia is a humane procedure intended to prevent unnecessary suffering in animals with irreversible diseases or poor prognosis. In Veterinary Medicine, this practice involves not only technical and ethical responsibilities but also important emotional challenges for professionals and students. Frequent exposure to animal suffering, complex decision-making, and tutors' grief may contribute to emotional distress, anxiety, and psychological burden. Despite the relevance of this topic in veterinary practice, studies evaluating the technical, ethical, and emotional preparedness of Veterinary Medicine undergraduates remain limited. Therefore, this study aims to assess the preparedness and perceptions of Veterinary Medicine students regarding euthanasia. This cross-sectional exploratory study with a quantitative approach will be conducted with approximately 100 to 200 students enrolled in different semesters of the Veterinary Medicine course at the University of Marília (UNIMAR). Data collection will be performed through a structured self-administered questionnaire composed of objective questions and Likert-scale statements addressing technical knowledge, ethical perceptions, emotional responses, and confidence related to euthanasia procedures. Participation will be voluntary and anonymous, following acceptance of the Informed Consent Form. The collected data will be analyzed using descriptive statistics and presented in tables and graphs. In addition, a selective literature review on euthanasia, bioethics, and mental health in Veterinary Medicine will be carried out to support the discussion of the findings. The expected results include identifying possible gaps in undergraduate training related to euthanasia, particularly regarding emotional preparedness and ethical decision-making. It is anticipated that students in advanced semesters will demonstrate greater technical knowledge; however, emotional discomfort and insecurity associated with euthanasia-related situations may still persist. The findings may contribute to discussions on improving veterinary education by encouraging teaching strategies that integrate technical, ethical, and emotional training for future professionals.

Palavras-chave: Euthanasia; Veterinary Medicine; Veterinary Students; Mental Health; Bioethics.