German Medical Association
Federation of the German Chambers of Physicians

21st Symposium of the Central and Eastern European Chambers of Physicians (ZEVA)
Bratislava, 25 – 27 September 2014

Country report: Germany
General elections September 2013
  → New Federal Minister of Health: Hermann Gröhe (CDU)

Current topics of interest:
  1. Assisted suicide
  2. Medical language tests
Assisted suicide
Current situation

- Assisted suicide is not a crime in Germany
  - Only commercially organised assisted suicide is illegal

- Model Professional Code forbids physician assisted suicide:
  *Physicians must support the dying while preserving their dignity and respecting their wishes. They are forbidden to kill patients upon their request. They may not perform assisted suicide.* (para. 16)

- Organised assisted suicide offered by “not-for-profit” companies

- Current topic of discussion & new law under consideration
Position of German medical profession:

- 2014 German Medical Assembly supported new law to criminalise organised & commercial assisted suicide
- Palliative medicine provisions must be expanded
- There should be no provisions in criminal law pertaining to physician assisted suicide – professional law is sufficient

“Law on Assisted Suicide” to be debated in German parliament next year
Medical language tests
Current situation

- April 2012: New law to facilitate recognition of non-EU professional qualifications
  - Migration of physicians to Germany made easier

- Proof of sufficient language skills required as part of application for medical licence by physicians from abroad

- Individual federal states (Länder) responsible for issuing medical licences
  - Currently no common standard for assessing language skills = variations in requirements across Germany
June 2014: Key issues paper on assessment of German language skills approved by state health ministers

- Medical language tests can be carried out by state chambers of physicians
- General language requirements: Level B2 of Common European Framework of Reference for Languages
- Medical language requirements: Level C1

Alternative proof of language skills:
- Medical degree completed in German language
- 3 years of professional training completed in German language
- 10 years of general schooling completed in German language
Medical language tests
Procedure & content

- **Structure (60 mins):**
  - Simulated physician-patient consultation (20 mins)
  - Discussion with another physician (20 mins)
  - Composition of typical medical text, e.g. letter of referral (20 mins)

- **Assessment:**
  - Language rather than medical knowledge assessed
  - Result valid throughout Germany
  - At least 2 examiners, ½ physicians

→ Progress towards standardisation of language requirements in Germany
Thank you!

Dr Max Kaplan
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President of the Bavarian State Chamber of Physicians