

# DOES KNOWING PATIENTS' WISHES INFLUENCE NURSES' AND PHYSICIANS' INTENTION TO PERFORM EUTHANASIA?

**Mireille Lavoie**, RN, Ph.D., Laval University et Centre de recherche du CHU de Québec, Canada

\* **Danielle Blondeau**, RN, Ph.D., Laval University, Canada

**Gaston Godin**, Ph.D., Laval University, Canada

**Lydi-Anne Vézina-Im**, M.Sc., Laval University, Canada

**Isabelle Martineau**, RN, M.Sc., Maison Michel-Sarrazin, Canada

**Louis Roy**, MD, Hôpital de l'Enfant-Jésus, Canada

8<sup>th</sup> World Research Congress of the European Association for Palliative Care, Lleida, Espagne

6 juin 2014



Instituts de recherche  
en santé du Canada

Canadian Institutes  
of Health Research



UNIVERSITÉ  
**LAVAL**




# Background

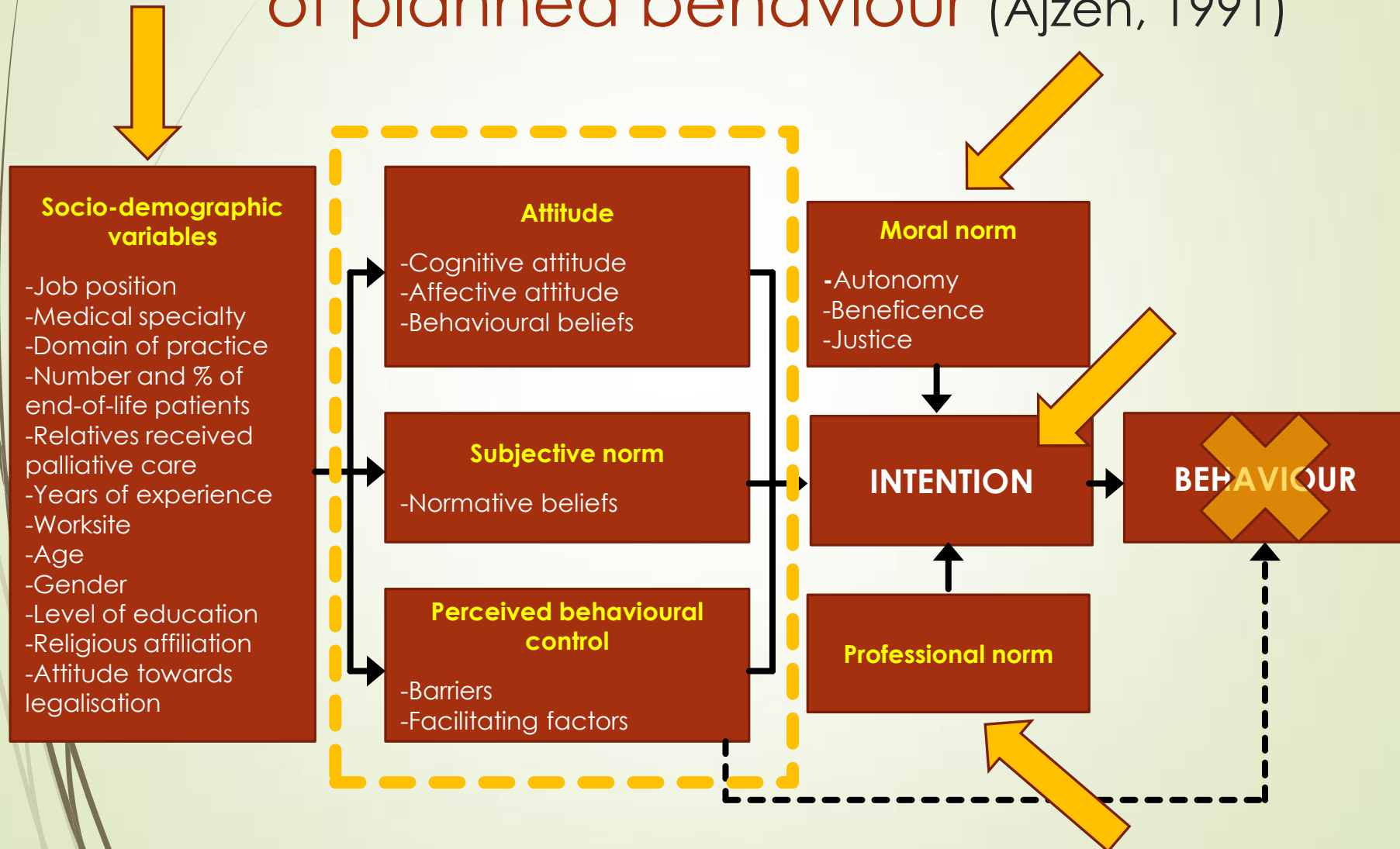
- ▶ Respecting patients' autonomy is often put forward as one of the main reasons why certain health professionals are favourable to euthanasia.
- ▶ Few studies have compared whether nurses and physicians hold different beliefs regarding euthanasia.



# Objective of the study

- ▶ To experimentally test whether knowing patients' wishes and health profession can affect intentions and beliefs regarding performing euthanasia using a  $2 \times 2$  random factorial design study  
(Experimental conditions: patient's wishes known or not; professions: nurses or physicians).
- 



# Extended version of the Theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen, 1991)





# Methods – Data collection

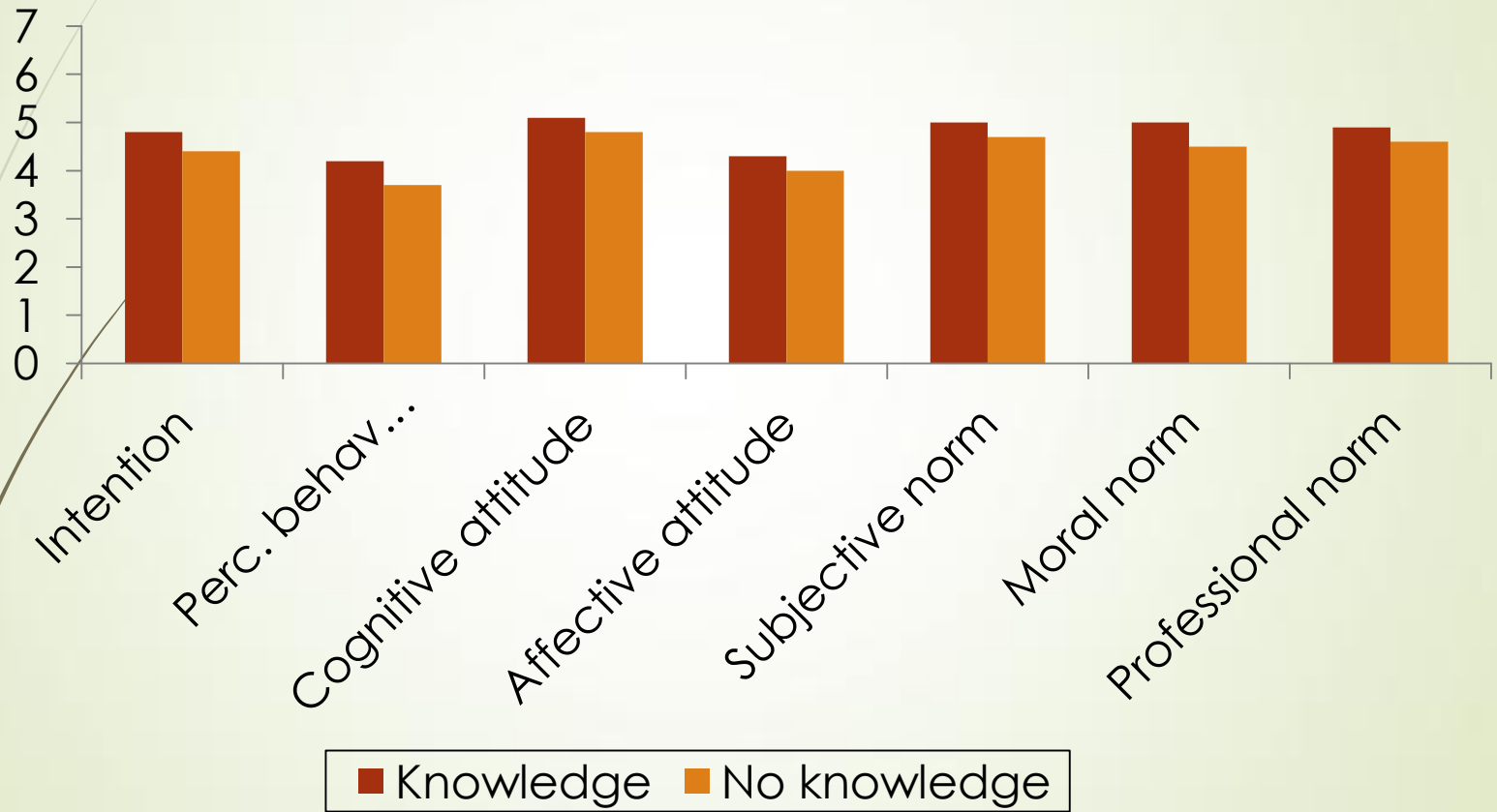
- ▶ A **vignette** describing a person near death was used to manipulate knowledge of patient's wishes.
- ▶ **Random samples** of nurses and physicians from Quebec, Canada
  - ▶ Weighted according to the domains of practice and medical specialties

- 
- 
- ▶ Data were collected by means of an anonymous validated questionnaire:
    1. 21 nurses and 8 physicians were interviewed to develop a questionnaire based on their beliefs;
    2. 11 nurses and 10 physicians validated the clinical vignette with the fictional patient;
    3. 17 nurses and 18 physicians completed the questionnaire twice to verify its psychometric qualities.

# Results – Sample characteristics

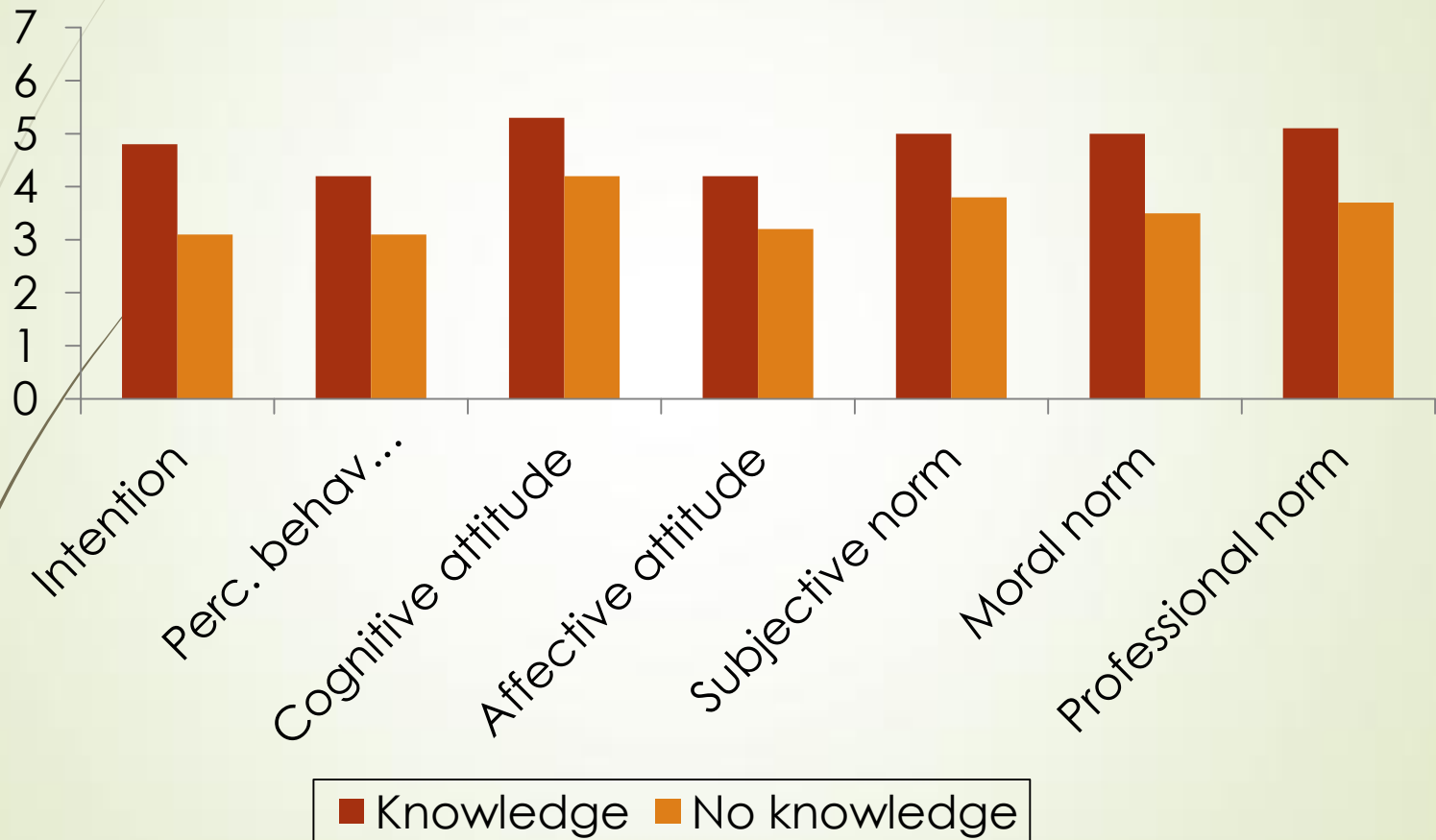
Variables	Means (SD) / Percentages			
	Knowledge		No knowledge	
	Nurses (n = 80)	Physicians (n = 58)	Nurses (n = 73)	Physicians (n = 59)
Age (years)	41.4 (11.6)	47.1 (14.2)	40.2 (11.2)	44.4 (4)
% female	92.5%	48.0%	86.1%	52.6%
> 10 years of experience	51.3%	56.0%	43.1%	61.4%

# Results for *nurses* (n = 153)





# Results for *physicians* (n = 117)





## Discussion – Results for *nurses*

- ▶ Knowing patients' wishes (autonomy) regarding euthanasia does not appear to influence nurses' intention and beliefs concerning euthanasia;
- ▶ Sometimes healthcare providers are faced with conflicts between competing ethical principles, such as autonomy and beneficence (Beauchamp & Childress, 2009).

## Discussion – Results for *physicians*

- ▶ Knowing patients' wishes regarding euthanasia seems important for physicians;
- ▶ In a previous review of European physicians' attitudes towards euthanasia, the right of the patient to decide about his/her own life and death was one of the reasons why physicians mentioned being favourable to euthanasia (Gielen et al., 2008)





# Conclusion

- ▶ Does knowing patients' wishes influence nurses' and physicians' intention to perform euthanasia?
  - ▶ **No** for nurses:  
Patient's beneficence seems more important.
  - ▶ **Yes** for physicians:  
Patient's autonomy seems important.



# Acknowledgements

- ▶ This work was supported by the Ethics Office of the Canadian Institutes of Health Research.
  - ▶ The authors would like to acknowledge the contribution of Steve Amireault, Ph.D., for his advices on the statistical analyses.
- 



# Thank you! Questions?

- ▶ Lavoie, M., Godin, G., Vézina-Im, L.-A., Blondeau, D., Martineau, I. & Roy, L. (2014). Effect of knowing patients' wishes and health profession on euthanasia. *J Palliat Care Med.* 4: 169.