

Study examines aspects of conscientious objection among nurses

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One-on-one interviews with eight nurses in Ontario revealed that nurses making conscientious objections to ethically-relevant policies lack concrete supports and need protection in healthcare practice settings.

The authors of the *Journal of Advanced Nursing* study noted that

healthcare practice is becoming more ethically complex, and nurses need to be able to address their issues of conscience to care that they ethically disagree with. For Canadian nurses, this need has been recently heightened by the national legalization of euthanasia, known as Medical Assistance in Dying in Canada.

"The situation of euthanasia in Canada highlights the need to attend to the freedom of conscience for nurses and all [healthcare professionals](#). As voiced by nurses in this study who are experiencing conflicts of conscience in professional settings, freedom of conscience clauses is paramount to supporting healthcare professionals to practice with clear boundaries in supportive workplace environments where their conscientious objections are inclusively respected," said primary author Dr. Christina Lamb.

"Importantly, conversations about conscience and conscientious objection need to occur on a routine basis in healthcare practice, so that respect for the human right to [conscience](#) becomes a forerunner in ethical conversations for [healthcare](#) professionals."

More information: Christina Lamb et al, Nurses' use of conscientious objection and the implications for conscience, *Journal of Advanced Nursing* (2018). [DOI: 10.1111/jan.13869](https://doi.org/10.1111/jan.13869)

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