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## Identification of the palliative phase in persons with dementia: A variety of opinions between healthcare professionals

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## Introduction

- Appropriate palliative care can deal with the needs and preferences of persons with dementia and their families
- One of the recommendations of EAPC White Paper is to consider the time point of the diagnosis of dementia as the starting point to set palliative care goals

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 White paper defining optimal  
 palliative care in older people with  
 dementia: A Delphi study and  
 recommendations from the European  
 Association for Palliative Care






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## A case vignette study in six European countries

**Aim**  
 To explore when professionals in long-term care settings consider a patient with dementia in need of palliative care.

**Methods**  
 Teams were given a case-vignette about a resident with dementia, 'Mrs. White', and asked to discuss when considered Mrs. White eligible for palliative care.  
 Data were analyzed using constant comparative method.






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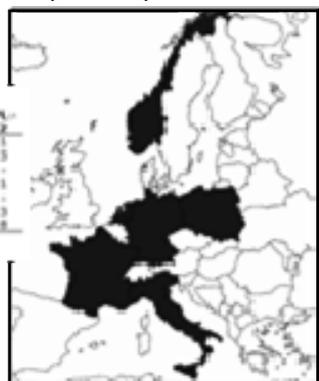
## Participants and settings

A case-vignette was given to 13 multidisciplinary teams working in LTC settings located in 6 countries: France, Germany, Italy, Norway, Poland and the Netherlands.

**Table 1: Participating professionals per nursing home**

	DE-1	DE-2	FR-1	FR-2	IT-1	IT-2	IT-3	NO-1	NO-2	NL-1	NL-2	PL-1	PL-2
Physician	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1	2	1
Nurse	3	2	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1
Healthcare assistant	4	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Psychologist	-	-	-	1	1	2	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Social worker	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Other	-	-	2	5	3	2	4	-	-	1	1	1	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>9</b>

DE: Germany, FR: France, IT: Italy, NO: Norway, PL: Poland, NL: the Netherlands






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## Results

Professionals described three moments when they considered patients with dementia eligible for palliative care.

**“Palliative care should start”:**

1) Early in the disease trajectory
2) When signs and symptoms of advanced dementia are present
3) From the moment that curative treatment of co-morbidities is no longer possible




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**Table 2:** Professionals’ consideration if and when a person with dementia is in need of palliative care

	DE- 1	DE- 2	FR- 1	FR- 2	IT- 1	IT- 2*	IT- 3	NO- 1	NO- 2*	NL- 1	NL- 2	PL- 1	PL- 2*
<b>Do you consider the person in the case vignette to be in need of palliative care?</b>	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
When she is in the early stage of dementia	-	+	-	-	-	+	-	-	+	+	-	-	+
When she has signs and symptoms of advanced dementia	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	+	+
When she has no more beneficial effect of curative treatment for co-morbidities	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	+	-	+	-	-

DE: Germany, FR: France, IT: Italy, NO: Norway, PL: Poland, NL: The Netherlands  
\* Services where there was no consensus between professionals



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**Discrepancies....**

.....were found not only between European countries, but also between staff members working in the same LTC setting.



→ different cultures and national regulations for palliative care

→ differences on the nomenclature about palliative care between services.

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**In the future...**

- *Integrate this issue into the palliative care education of healthcare professionals*
- *Update the core curriculum (skills and tasks) of healthcare professionals who work in palliative care*
- *Update and disseminate guidelines and recommendations with the definition of palliative care and the moment when it should start*

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