

ETHICAL PRINCIPLES IN PALLIATIVE CARE

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Object of the study

The main goal of a qualitative empirical-ethical research was to identify and analyse moral issues arising in the practical field of palliative care. The results of this study will be described in this presentation; which moral issues arise in palliative care practice? The moral dilemmas palliative caregivers have to deal with in their daily routines will be explained by comparing them with the findings of a previously performed literature study in which moral dilemmas were explored.

Methods used to identify and analyse moral issues arising in palliative care practice

- Systematic analysis in which literature and practice findings are compared.
- Participatory observations in five different settings; medical oncology ward in a general hospital and in a university hospital, a hospice, a nursing home and a general practice.
- Qualitative interviews with key figures in the settings.

Results

The significance of moral problems in palliative care practice was sometimes supported by the findings in literature, although differences between literature and practice can be distinguished as well. The moral issues exclusively identified in literature or practice will be made transparent. There is an overlap of moral issues in the five settings, at the same time several settings show their 'own' specific dilemmas. Attention will be paid to those two aspects.

Discussion and conclusion

The moral issues arising in the practical field of palliative care were clarified by empirical and ethical research methods. The issues specifically arising in palliative care practice are highlighted. The question is whether ethical principles can be distinguished that are specific for the practice of palliative care.