

## **CATPAL: INITIAL EXPERIENCE OF THE CATALAN RESEARCH MULTICENTRIC GROUP FOR PALLIATIVE CARE.**

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The progress of any medical discipline is based in experience, formation and research. Commonly, the natural development of each one of these elements is different. When de palliative care teams are consolidated and they are giving formation to other professionals, it emerges the need to record and to assess their results and to seek new ways to treat our patients. In Catalonia with a population of 6 million habitants the Palliative Care services has been implemented gradually, arriving now to 48 home teams, 26 hospital support teams and 27 specific units (400 beds). In spite of the accumulated experience and team's consolidation, it was identified a lack of methodological training and the limited resources, as the main causes of a low production of research.

In 1997 some palliative care services created a formal co-operative group for research, named CATPAL. This group defined the follow main objectives: to promote research centred in the needs of patients and families; the co-operation between services; the interdisciplinary design; to focus in different areas of palliative care interest (symptom control, emotional, social, quality of life, ethical, and services organisation); to keep an ethical commitment (design, realisation, and relations with the industry).

The group is organised in 3 levels: steering committee, general and area co-ordinators, and field work teams. The steering committee and area co-ordinators make the research project, with the advise of methodological specialist and ethical committee. The project finally will be present to field work teams. All professionals of Catalonia and Balears Islands are invited to participate like study co-ordinators. Until now the appointment to studies of teams, which have received a research purpose has been higher to 75 %. Considering the 6 first finished studies we have recruited a total number of 3592 patients, which was useful to study assessment 2064 (58%).

After this initial experience, we propose to advance in the consolidation of the group, with the following aims and actions: to improve de quality of epidemiology studies; tendency to realise prospective randomised clinical trials; introduction of qualitative methodology; incorporation of formal ethical advice for all studies; specific developed areas (symptom control, emotional, social, nursing, evaluation of services); specific groups for leader specific studies but keeping de interdisciplinary orientation (doctors, nurses, psychologists, and social workers); co-operation with Spanish and international groups; stable full time structure, including research nurse, secretary, data managers, and methodologists; stable and diversified financing (grants, industry, donor).