

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

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### Background

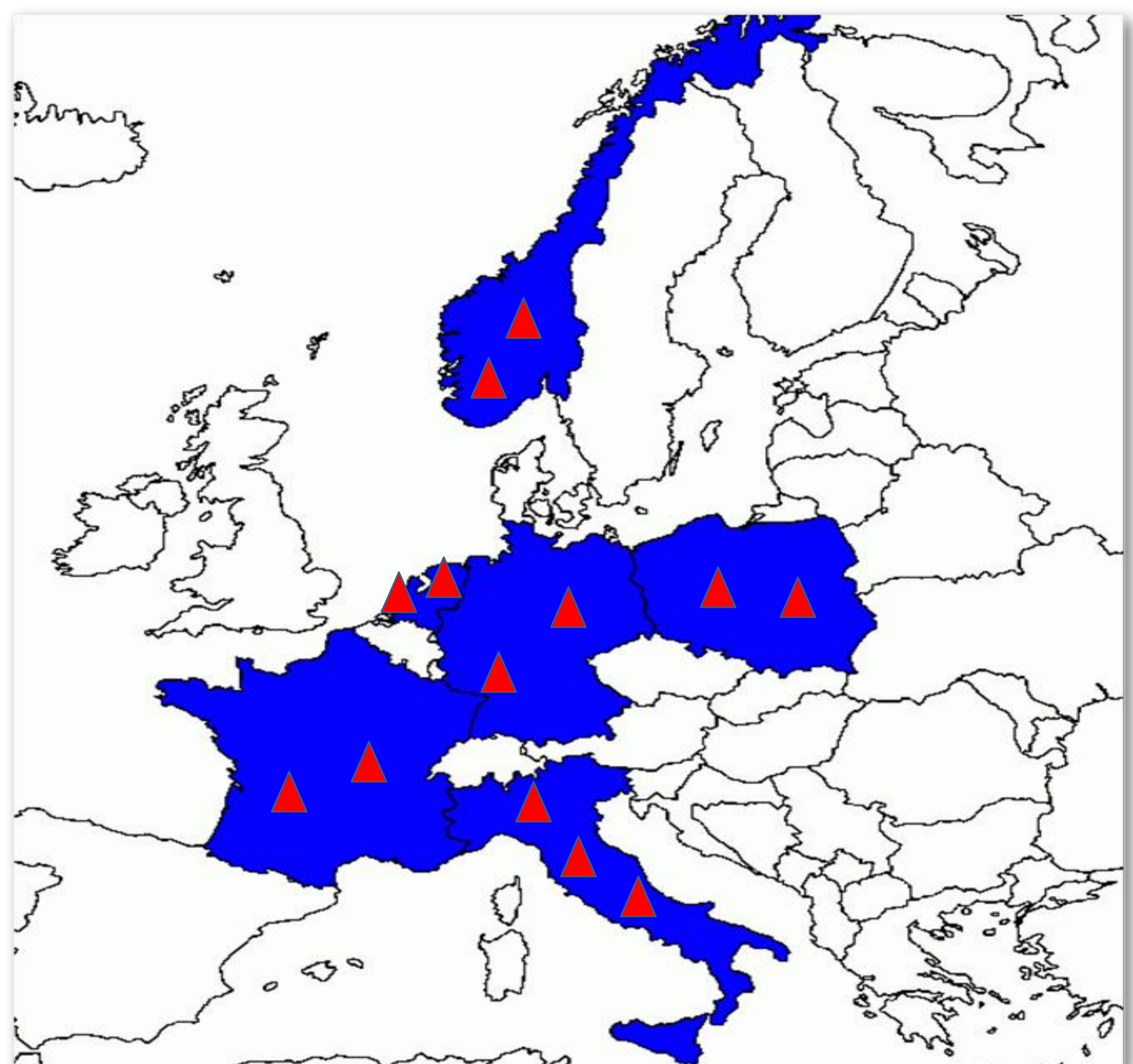
A palliative care approach can improve the outcomes of dementia patients and their families. However, it is challenging for professionals to recognize when a person with dementia has entered the advanced stage of the disease. As a consequence, many of their symptoms and needs often remain underestimated and inadequate palliative care is provided.

### A case vignette study in six European countries

To explore when professionals in long term care (LTC) settings consider a patient with dementia in need of palliative care, a case-vignette was given to 13 multidisciplinary teams working in long-term care settings located in 6 countries: France, Germany, Italy, Norway, Poland and the Netherlands. Teams were asked to discuss when they considered eligible for palliative care the resident with dementia described in the vignette.

### Results

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



▲ =LTC settings involved

#### "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*

### Discussion

Discrepancies were found not only *between European countries*, but also *between staff members* working in the same LTC setting. Differences between countries were expected, because of different cultures and national regulations for palliative care. However, different opinions even within countries indicate that there are differences on the nomenclature about palliative care between services.

### Key messages

- ***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***

