

Palliative care service use in four European countries

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Background

Around two-thirds of people in Europe die non-suddenly and are in potential need of palliative care towards the end of life. Yet there is limited cross-national research on how many people receive palliative care and how long before death it is initiated. Monitoring palliative care provision is crucial for health service planning on national levels.

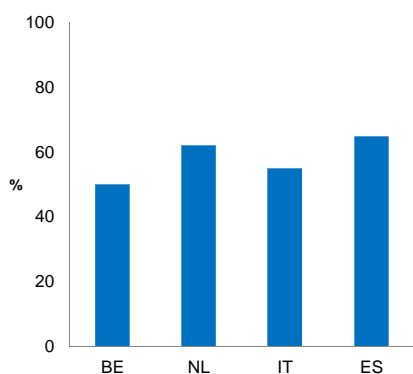
Aim

- to describe and compare between countries
- ❖ the percentage of patients who received palliative care in the last three months of life from general practitioners or multidisciplinary palliative care teams
- ❖ the time of initiation of multidisciplinary palliative care

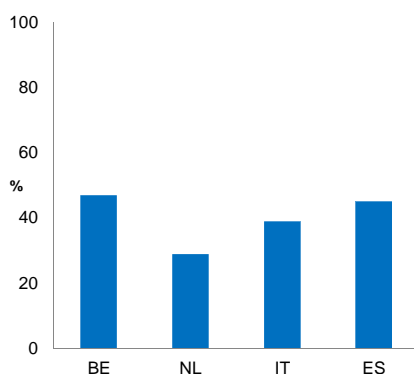
Methods

- ❖ Population-based mortality follow back study via epidemiological surveillance networks of general practitioners (GPs) in Belgium, the Netherlands, Italy and Spain
- ❖ GPs registered the care in the last three months of life of every deceased practice patient (≥ 18 years) using a standardized form
- ❖ We studied 4466 non-sudden deaths

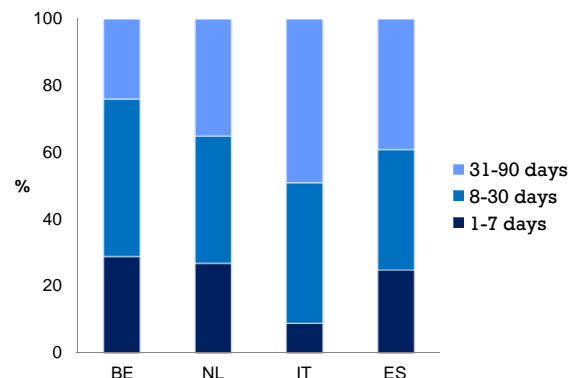
In all countries at least half of the patients received palliative care from their general practitioner



Differences in the percentages of patients who received multidisciplinary palliative care



Time of initiation of multidisciplinary palliative care before death



Conclusions

- ❖ There are important differences between countries in the number of patients receiving palliative care, particularly by multidisciplinary palliative care teams, and the time of its initiation.
- ❖ The differences between countries may be reflections of differences in health care policies and types of services available.
- ❖ These findings highlight the need for a better understanding of the mechanisms through which patient- and policy-related factors affect people's access to and a timely start of palliative care.

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