

# Society facing death and its implications for end-of-life care: a qualitative study with healthcare professionals (Research Project FFI2016-76927-P- AEI/FEDER, UE)



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## Background

End-of-life care is conditioned by the social opinion towards disease, suffering, death and life. In Western countries, the process of dying is often considered a taboo; however, the debate around the topic has led to attempts to dignify end-of-life care.

## Aim

The objective of this study was to understand how social patterns about death influence end-of-life palliative care from the perspective of healthcare professionals.

## Methodology

A qualitative study based on grounded theory was designed and carried out between 2017 and 2019. Forty-six professionals (6 physicians, 5 clinical psychologists and 35 nurses) took part in the study, selected through theoretical and convenience sampling. Four focus groups, with a total of 20 participants, and 17 in-depth interviews were conducted. The data were analysed following Grounded Theory procedure with the assistance of ATLAS.ti software (constant comparative analysis, open, axial and selective coding).

## Conclusion

Patients with far-advanced diseases perceive that care in hospital emergency departments is characterised by neglect, deficiencies in information and clinical communication, and the absence of empathetic care. All of this adds to the perception of loss of dignity in end-of-life care in emergency departments.

## Results

Data analysis suggests that there may be two opposing social patterns of coping with death. One represents a **“Positive way”** that includes effort and internal work to make death a part of existence. The other is a **“Negative way”** that is dominated by a culture of concealment and stubbornness towards death. Participants also conceptualised **“End-of-life and death as a care process”**, which encompasses “The facilitating role of health professionals” and “Conflicts in decision-making

## References

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