Background

Globally the annual number of deaths is rising. It is useful to examine where future deaths may occur at a national level, to facilitate decision-making regarding future service provision and resource allocation.

Aims

To project where people will die from 2017 to 2040 across all care settings in Scotland; to prioritise recommendations in response to projected trends.

Methods


2 Transparent expert consultation with representatives from government, clinical practice, health and social care service management and academia.

Results

• Annual deaths in Scotland are projected to increase by 15.9% from 56,728 in 2016 (32.8% aged 85+ years) to 65,756 deaths in 2040 (45% aged 85+ years) (Figure 1).

• Between 2004 and 2016, proportions of home and care home deaths increased, while the proportion of hospital deaths declined (Figure 2).

• If current trends continue, deaths at home and in care homes will increase and two-thirds of patients will die outside of hospital by 2040 (Figure 3a).

• If care home capacity does not expand, hospital deaths will rise. (Figure 3b).

Transparent Expert Consultation

To sustain current trends, priorities include:

• Increase and equip the community health and care workforce through recruitment to community posts, education, training and valuing of care work.

• Build community capacity and resilience by providing information, practical and financial support for informal carers and fostering community engagement initiatives.

• Stimulate a realistic debate on death and dying, residential care, individual choice and sustainable equitable funding.

Conclusion

To sustain current trends, end-of-life care provision in community settings needs to increase to support over 60% more people who are projected to die in that setting by 2040, otherwise hospital deaths will increase. Investing in a community-based health and social care workforce; and improving support for informal carers is crucial.