

# Scottish research in non-cancer palliative care in the last decade: a scoping review



Care and support through terminal illness

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## Background

The need for palliative care, especially amongst patients with non-cancer diagnoses, is increasing as the population ages.<sup>1,2</sup> Understanding non-cancer research is crucial to develop early palliative care for all patients in need.

## Objective

To gauge the scope of the research carried out in non-cancer palliative care in Scotland since 2006.

## Method

A scoping review of non-cancer palliative care research conducted in Scotland between 2006 and 2015 was conducted. 4 databases were searched. Study characteristics with regards to setting, sample, research method and key findings were examined.

## Results

- 52 research papers were identified.
- There was an upward trend in the studies conducted, the majority of which were qualitative. (Figures 1&2)
- 7 core research themes emerged. (Figure 3)
- 29% of papers focused on specific non-cancer groups; and a vast body of research on the experiences and needs of patients with non-cancer has emerged. (Figure 4)
- Patient identification for a palliative care approach was an important theme. Several papers show that a significant number of patients are not receiving palliative care despite the fact that they would benefit.
- Several papers focused on improving the delivery of palliative care within the hospital setting.

Figure 1: Count of peer-reviewed articles by year of publication.

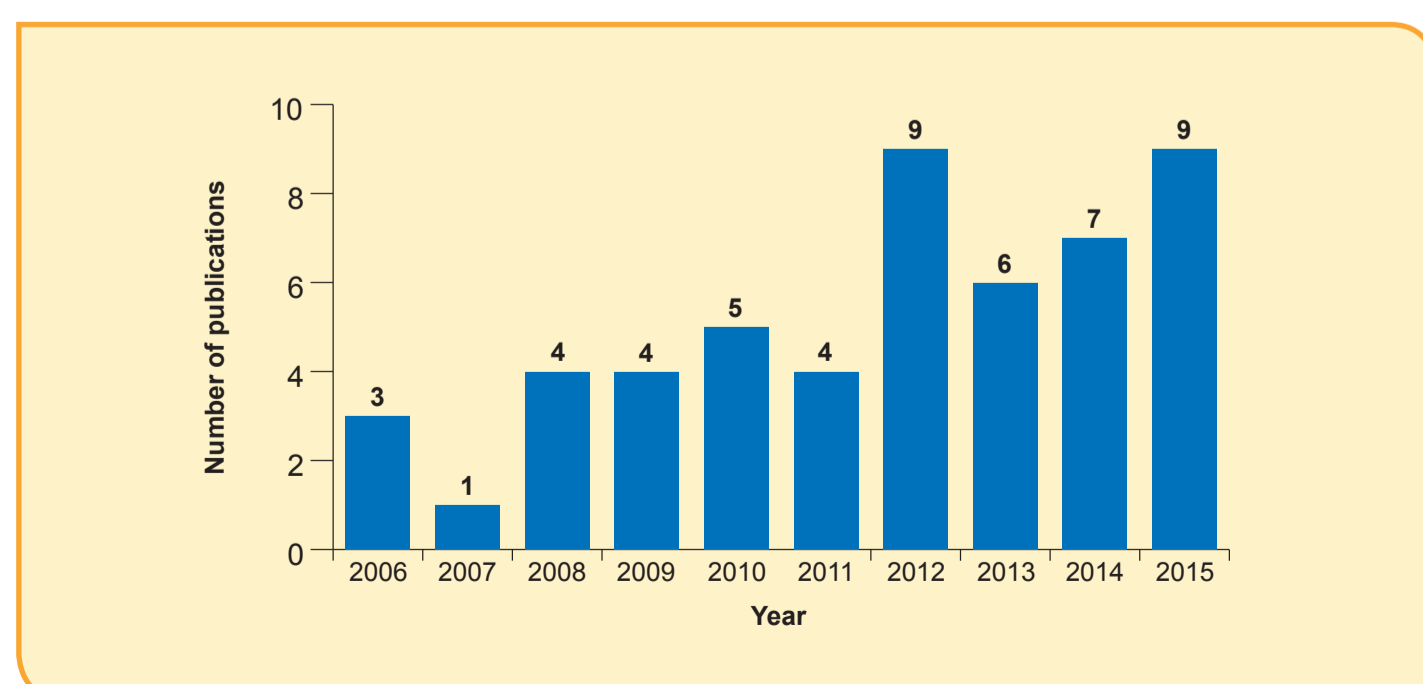


Figure 2: Methods used in Scottish research on palliative care for people with a non-cancer diagnosis. (n = number of papers)

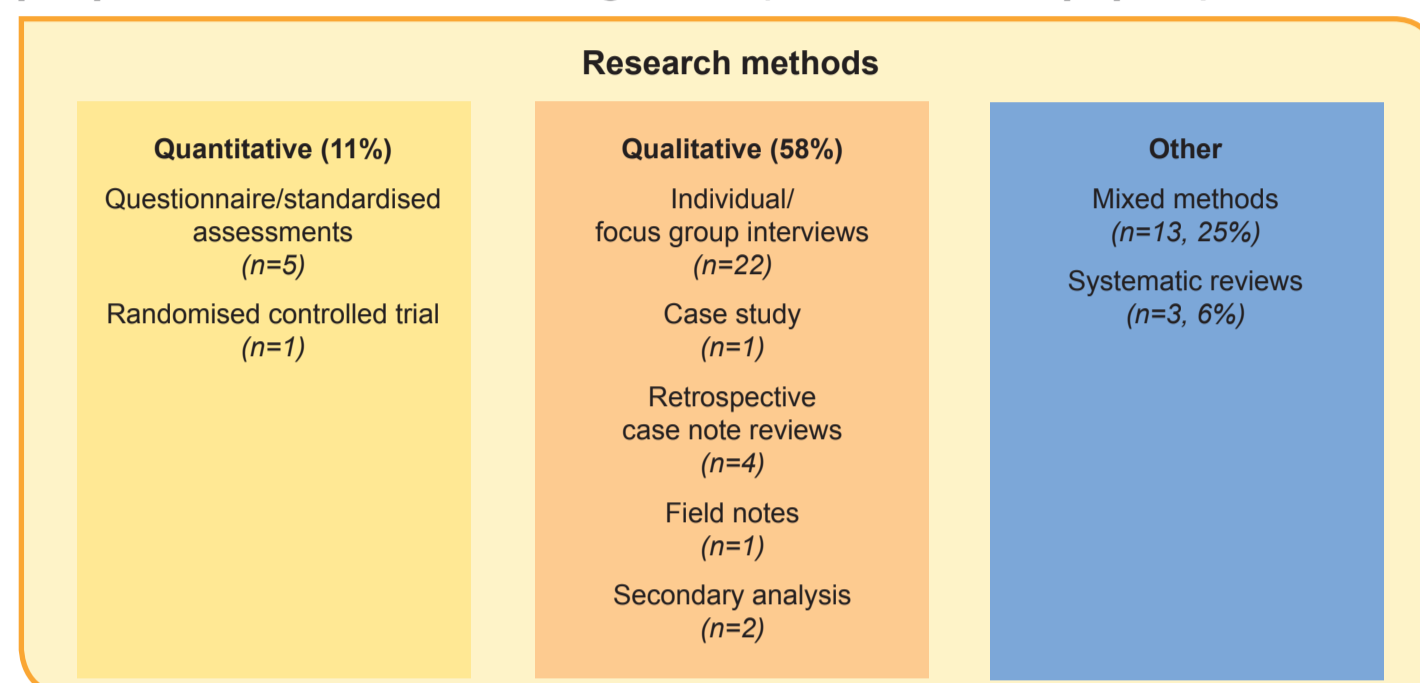


Figure 3: Seven core research themes identified.

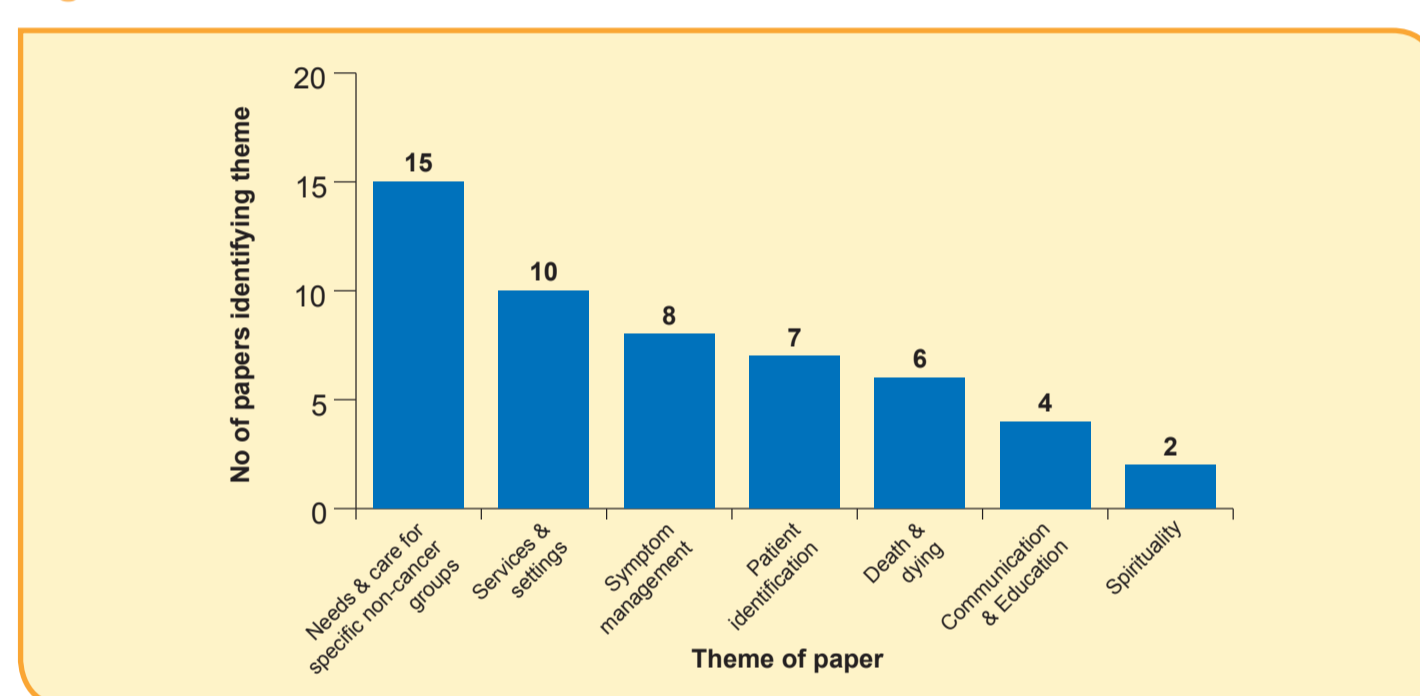
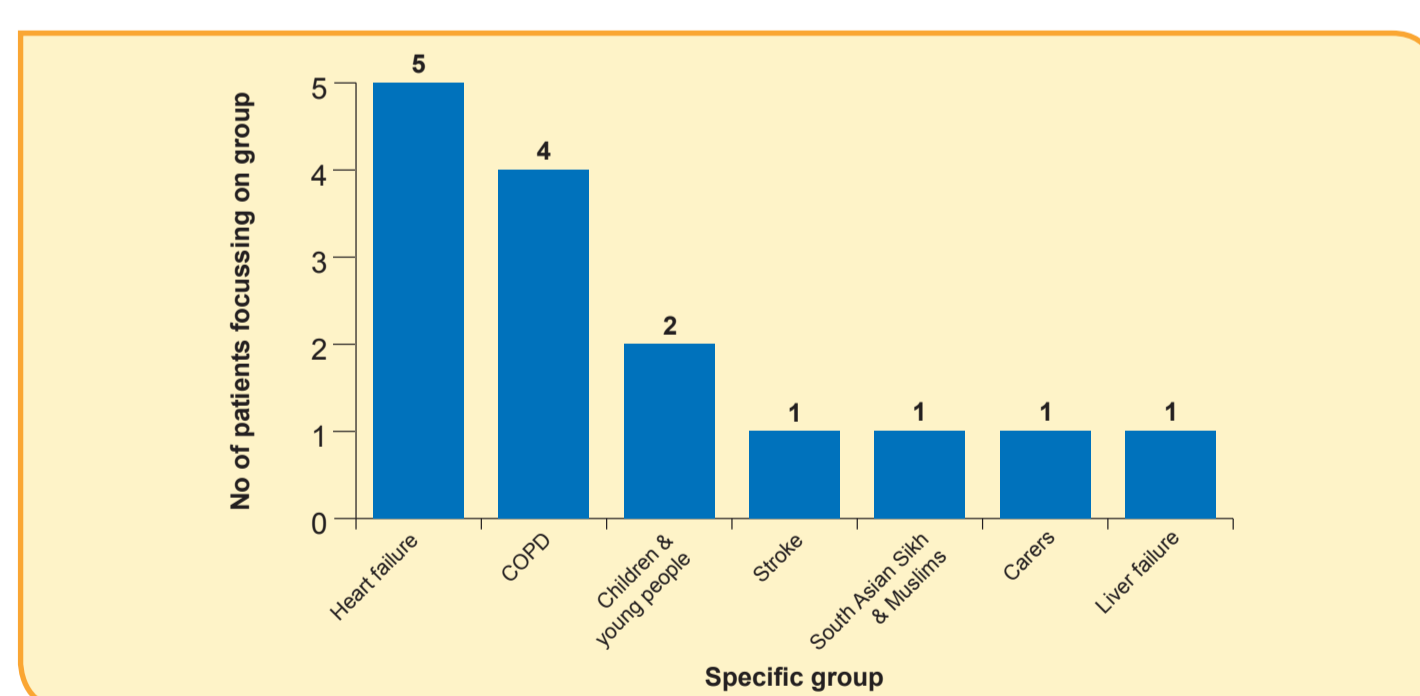


Figure 4: Papers focussing on specific non-cancer groups.



## Conclusion

- A considerable body of Scottish research now exists in this area and clearly shows inequalities in palliative care provision.
- Identification of patients for a palliative approach has improved, but further training for health care professionals is needed as highlighted by the Scottish Government's new strategic framework.<sup>3</sup>
- Service redesign is required to meet the multi-dimensional trajectories of need of patients with organ failure, frailty and multimorbidity as well as cancer patients.
- Further research should prioritise interventions that target non-cancer patients.

References: 1) Christensen K, Doblhammer G, Rau R, Vaupel JW. Ageing populations: the challenges ahead. Lancet. 2009; 374(9696): 1196-208. 2) Leveck PA. Palliation and the caring hospital – filling the gap. J R Coll Physicians Edinburgh. 2014; 44(2): 98-102. 3) Scottish Government SAH. Strategic Framework for Action on Palliative and End of Life Care [Internet]. 2015 [cited 2016 Apr 30]. Available from: <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2015/12/4053/downloads>.