

# Palliative care research in Scotland 2006-2015: A scoping review

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## Background

The Scottish Government set out its 5 year vision to improve palliative care in its Strategic Framework for Action 2016-2021. This includes a commitment to evidence based knowledge exchange across Scotland. A comprehensive scoping review of Scottish palliative care research was considered an important first step.

## Aims

- To identify all Scottish palliative care research published from 2006 to 2015.
- To map key thematic areas relevant to clinical practice, service development and policy.

## Methods

Palliative care research involving at least one co-author from a Scottish institution was eligible for inclusion. Five databases were searched with relevant MeSH terms and keywords; additional papers authored by members of the Scottish Research Forum for palliative and end of life care were added. 496 papers underwent full text review; 308 were retained in the final set.

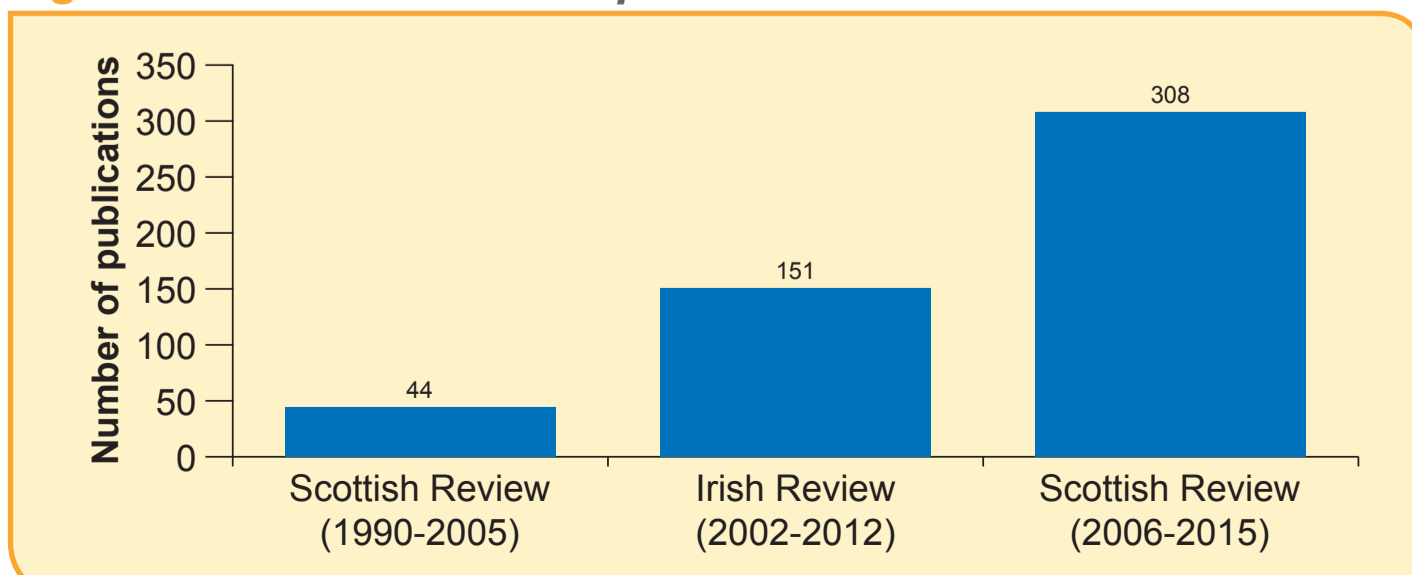
## Results

- There has been a steady increase in publications over time. (Figure 1)
- Research output was strong compared with that reported in a similar Scottish review in 2006 and a review of Irish palliative care research in 2013.<sup>1,2</sup> (Figure 2)
- In terms of methodology, 33% were quantitative, 30% were qualitative, 14% were reviews and 23% had other designs including mixed methods.
- 73% were descriptive studies, and 10% were interventions or feasibility studies (31 papers). Twelve studies were randomized controlled trials.

Figure 1: Publications by year.

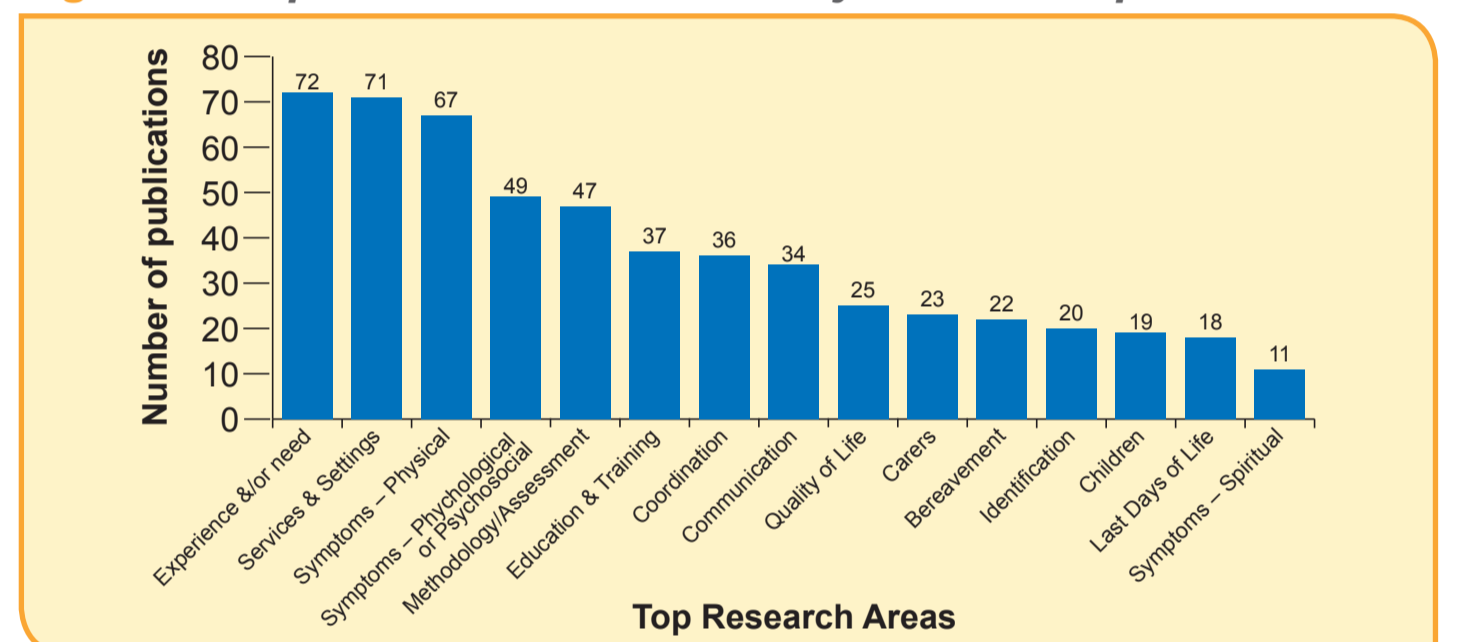


Figure 2: Publications compared with similar studies.



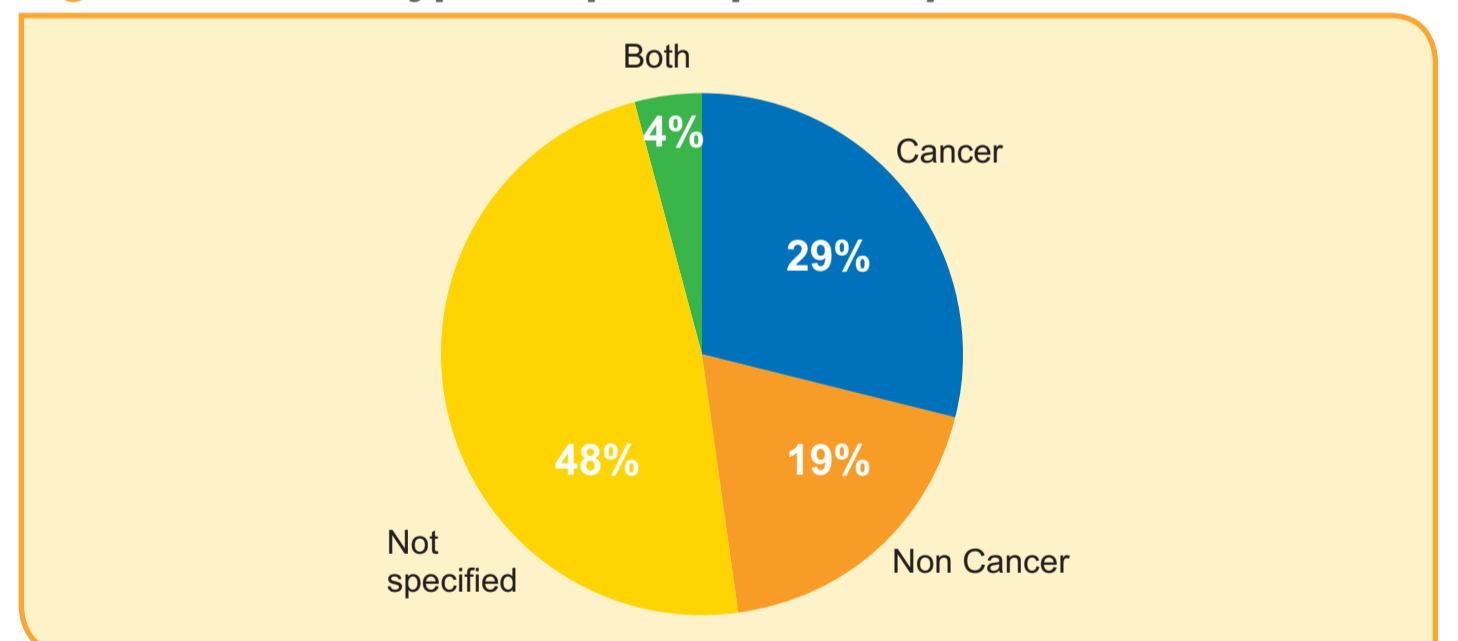
- The top 3 areas of research focus were experiences and/or needs; services and settings; and physical symptom management. (Figure 3)
- 58 papers (19%) were specifically concerned with palliative care for people with conditions other than cancer. (Figure 4)
- Few studies focused on ehealth, health economics, out-of-hours, resilience and public health approaches.
- Relatively few papers focused on palliative care for children and young people (18 papers), and only 4 included children in the data collection process.

Figure 3: Top 15 areas of research by number of publications\*.



\*Note: Publications can have up to three associated themes so may appear more than once.

Figure 4: Illness types of participants in published studies.



## Conclusion

There was a considerable increase in palliative care research output over the last decade, with many studies identifying early palliative care needs, and needs in conditions other than cancer.

The new Scottish Research Forum for palliative and end of life care is now engaging with clinicians, service managers and policy-makers to facilitate understanding, use and further dissemination of key implications for education, service innovation, policy and practice.



References: 1) Johnston B et al. (2006). A scoping review of palliative care in Scotland. Final Report. Cancer Care Research Centre. Available at: [https://www.palliativecarescotland.org.uk/content/publications/1347299403\\_A-Scoping-Review-of-Palliative-Care.pdf](https://www.palliativecarescotland.org.uk/content/publications/1347299403_A-Scoping-Review-of-Palliative-Care.pdf). 2) McIlfratrick S & Murphy T (2013). Palliative care research on the island of Ireland over the last decade: a systematic review and thematic analysis of peer reviewed publications. BMC Palliative Care 12: 33-33.

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