

PALLIATIVE NURSING FOR DANISH CARDIAC PATIENTS



– a national review of hospitals' clinical practice guidelines.

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BACKGROUND

Palliative nursing is recommended to patients with critical heart disease throughout the illness trajectory. However, the extent to which Danish cardiology departments have undertaken palliative nursing are unknown.

AIM

To review clinical practice guidelines from Danish hospitals on palliative nursing for cardiac patients.

METHOD

We conducted a systematic search in databases for hospitals in the five Regions of Denmark for clinical guidelines produced or revised in 2015-2020. Full-text guidelines were assessed against eligibility criteria and data on content was extracted.

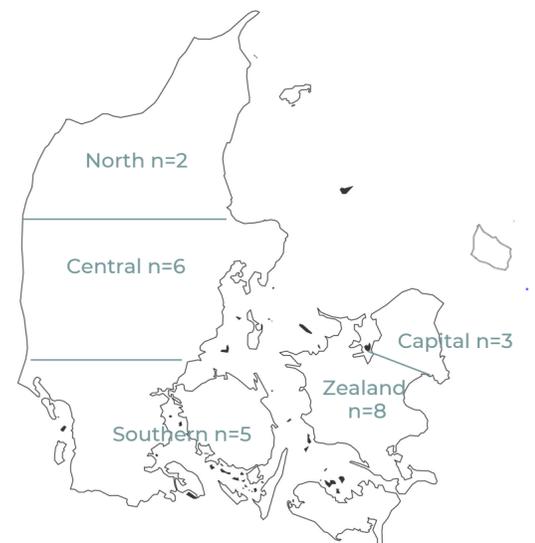


Figure 1: Guidelines found in each region

RESULTS

Across hospitals in all five Regions 24 out of 70 guidelines on palliative care originated from departments of cardiology. The amount of guidelines differs between the 5 regions (see figure 1) and only 13 out of 24 built on scientific evidence. There was a predominant focus on terminal care and pharmacological treatment for clinical symptoms. Social needs was mentioned in over half but focus was restricted to applying for medicine subsidies. Ten guidelines described existential issues and management and in one third we found specific descriptions of nonpharmacological nursing interventions. Even fewer guidelines mentioned early palliative care. Support for informal caregivers was mentioned in most guidelines yet not acknowledged as a task for the hospital. Furthermore, the review uncovered a limited focus on systematic assessment tools (EORTC-qlq-15-PAL) and cross-sectoral cooperation (see figure 2).

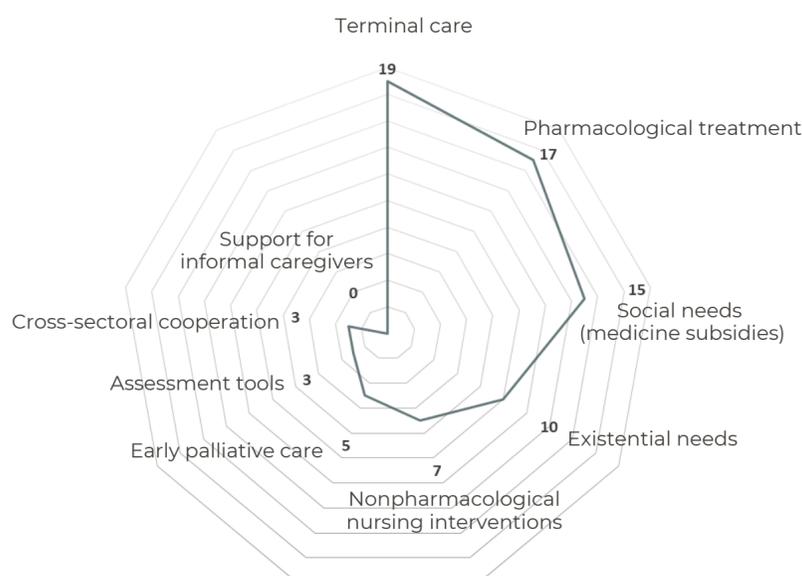


Figure 2: Content of the clinical guidelines

CONCLUSION

Clinical guidelines on palliative nursing in a cardiac department were found in all the Danish regions, but with great variation and a dominant focus on pharmacological treatment on clinical symptoms and terminal care. The review revealed a need to improve guidelines on how to apply nursing interventions in practice. It also revealed a need for a stronger base in scientific evidence. The variations across hospitals suggests a need for a national guideline on palliative care for the cardiac patient.

