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Dr. Tinne Smets, Co-Promotor VUB

End-of-Life Care Research Group
Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB) & Ghent University

PhD in Social Health Sciences
2015-2016

INVITATION to the Public defence of

Rebecca VERHOFSTEDE

To obtain the academic degree of '**DOCTOR IN SOCIAL HEALTH SCIENCES**'

Improving end-of-life care in acute geriatric hospital wards in Flanders: a phase 0-2 study of the Care Programme for the Last Days of Life.

Monday 23 November 2015

Het Pand, Onderbergen 1, 9000 Gent – De Refter, 15:00

How to reach the campus Jette:

<http://www.vub.ac.be/english/infoabout/campuses>



Vrije Universiteit Brussel

Summary of the dissertation

As populations worldwide are ageing and patterns of diseases in the last years of life are also changing with more people dying from chronic debilitating conditions, the World Health Organization (WHO) has identified palliative care and end-of-life care as one of the public health priorities for older people. While we are aware of a substantial proportion of older people dying in acute geriatric hospital wards, we lack reliable data on what care they receive at the end of life and what the quality of the dying process is. However, acute hospital care for older people is considered to be inadequate to the needs of dying patients. It is of major importance to further expand the existing knowledge about end-of-life care for older people and to develop a new initiative to improve end-of-life care for older people dying in acute geriatric hospital wards. To do this we used three robust research methods: 1) death certificate study in Flanders, 2) retrospective cross-sectional descriptive study, and 3) Medical Research Council (MRC) Framework for developing and evaluating complex interventions.

By using these methods, this dissertation gives insight into the type of care that older people of different ages receive at the end of their life, the end-of-life care for patients dying in acute geriatric wards in terms of the performed medical and nursing interventions and the medication policy during the last 48 hours as well as the quality of dying of patients dying in an acute geriatric hospital setting. In addition, this dissertation presents and reflects upon the results of the development and evaluation of the Care Programme for the Last Days of Life to improve end-of-life care for patients dying in acute geriatric wards. The findings in this dissertation may help us to address important challenges and issues in end-of-life for older people by formulating some important implications for health care staff, policy makers and researchers.

Curriculum Vitae

Rebecca Verhofstede was born on the 13th of August 1987 in Ghent, Belgium. She studied midwifery at Artevelde Hogeschool Ghent and obtained her Master in Health Prevention and Promotion at Ghent University in 2010. After that Rebecca started working as a junior researcher at the End-of-Life Care Research Group of the Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB) & Ghent University. Rebecca conducted research on end-of-life care in acute geriatric hospital wards in Flanders, supervised by Prof. Dr. Luc Deliëns and Prof. Dr. Nele Van Den Noortgate, and co-supervised by Dr. Tinne Smets. Her study was part of the 'Flanders study to improve End-of-Life Care and Evaluation Tools' (FLIECE project), which was supported by a grant from IWT (SBO IWT nr 100036).