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Joint PhD VUB & UGent  
2018-2019

INVITATION to the Public defence of

**Gaëlle VANBUTSELE**

To obtain the academic degree of

**'DOCTOR IN SOCIAL HEALTH SCIENCES''  
'DOCTOR IN HEALTH SCIENCES'**

**Early integration of palliative care in oncology.**

**Tuesday 16 October 2018  
Aula Ceremoniezaal, 16:30  
Campus Aula  
Voldersstraat 9, 9000 Gent.**

## Summary of the dissertation

Palliative care has evolved from a philosophy of care for dying patients to a professional discipline with expertise in symptom management, psychosocial and spiritual care, support for informal carers, complex decision making and end-of-life care. The World Health Organization stresses that palliative care is applicable early in the course of the illness, together with other therapies that are intended to prolong life. However, in routine clinical practice, specialized palliative care is often initiated late in the disease trajectory.

By using quantitative survey methods and a randomized controlled trial, this dissertation gives insight into (1) the challenges of palliative care in oncology regarding symptom management (e.g. depression), and referral practices to specialist palliative care and (2) the benefits of early and systematic integration of palliative care in oncology for patients and their informal carers in the Belgian health care setting.

The findings in this dissertation can be used to increase the awareness of the benefits of palliative care and to develop and promote timely and systematic integration of specialized palliative care in oncology.

## Curriculum Vitae

Gaëlle Vanbutsele obtained her master in clinical psychology at Ghent University in 2009 and a master degree in International Business Economics and Management at the Hogeschool- Universiteit Brussel in 2010. While working as a doctoral researcher at the End-of-Life Care Research Group of the Vrije Universiteit Brussel and Ghent University, her main focus was on conducting a randomized controlled trial of early and systematic integration of palliative care in oncology. This was funded by the Research Foundation Flanders, Kom Op Tegen Kanker and the scientific fund Willy Gepts.