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PhD in Social Health Sciences
2021-2022

INVITATION to the Public defence of

Kim DE NOOIJER

To obtain the academic degree of

DOCTOR OF SOCIAL HEALTH SCIENCES

**Specialised palliative home care for older people:
towards a new service model**

The defence will take place on

Friday, 8 July 2022 at 3 p.m.

In Auditorium Piet Brouwer

Faculty of Medicine and Pharmacy, Laarbeeklaan 103, 1090 Brussel

and can be followed online, accessible through the following link:

https://gf.vub.ac.be/redirects/PhD_defense_Kim_de_Nooijer.php

Summary of the dissertation

People live increasingly longer, but they often do not spend their last phase of life in good health. Many older persons experience long periods of illness, multimorbidity, or frailty prior to dying, along with symptoms and concerns across physical, psychosocial, and spiritual domains. Palliative care is indicated for older people with serious chronic conditions, as it aims to address the multidimensional problems associated with life-threatening illness by means of early identification, assessment, and treatment. However, there is limited evidence on which palliative care service models are best in addressing this population's complex care needs.

First, this dissertation gives insight into current palliative care services for older people as well as their palliative care needs. Secondly, it describes the development of a theory-based, timely and short-term specialised palliative home care service intervention (called Frailty+ intervention) for older people with frailty and complex care needs and their family. Finally, this dissertation describes the pilot randomised controlled trial conducted to evaluate the feasibility, implementation, and preliminary effectiveness of the Frailty+ intervention. The results of this work show that the Frailty+ intervention has the potential to improve patient and family outcomes. However, its implementation in clinical practice – and particularly the timely start of palliative care – is very challenging as it requires difficult changes in current practices of palliative care services. This work provides recommendations for further adaptation and improvement of the Frailty+ intervention and its theoretical model and more broadly, for the role of specialised palliative care services in the care for older people with frailty.

Curriculum Vitae

Kim de Nooijer was born on 1 March 1993 in Vlissingen, the Netherlands. She obtained her Bachelor's degree in Health Sciences in 2015 at the Maastricht University, the Netherlands, where she was also selected for the Honours Programme of her Bachelor's degree. In 2017, she obtained her Research Master's degree in Health Sciences, with a specialisation in Clinical Epidemiology, at the Erasmus University Medical Center Rotterdam, the Netherlands. During her Bachelor's degree, she went on an Erasmus Exchange Semester at the University of Helsinki (Finland) and during her Master's degree on a Research Internship Abroad at the University of Bologna (Italy).

After obtaining her Research Master's degree, Kim started in September 2017 as a Doctoral Researcher at the End-of-Life Care Research Group at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB) in Belgium. Kim worked on a Research Foundation Flanders (FWO) funded research project under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Lieve Van den Block and Prof. Dr. Lara Pivodic. This project entailed the development, implementation, and evaluation (pilot RCT) of a theory-based timely and short-term specialised palliative care intervention for older people with frailty and their family carers in primary care. The findings of this research project have been published in international high-impact peer-reviewed journals. Furthermore, Kim has disseminated her research through presentations at national and international conferences and scientific workshops. Kim's aim is to further contribute to the development of effective palliative care interventions for older people, and to improve methodological procedures for palliative care trials.