



# The End of Life in Marginalized Populations

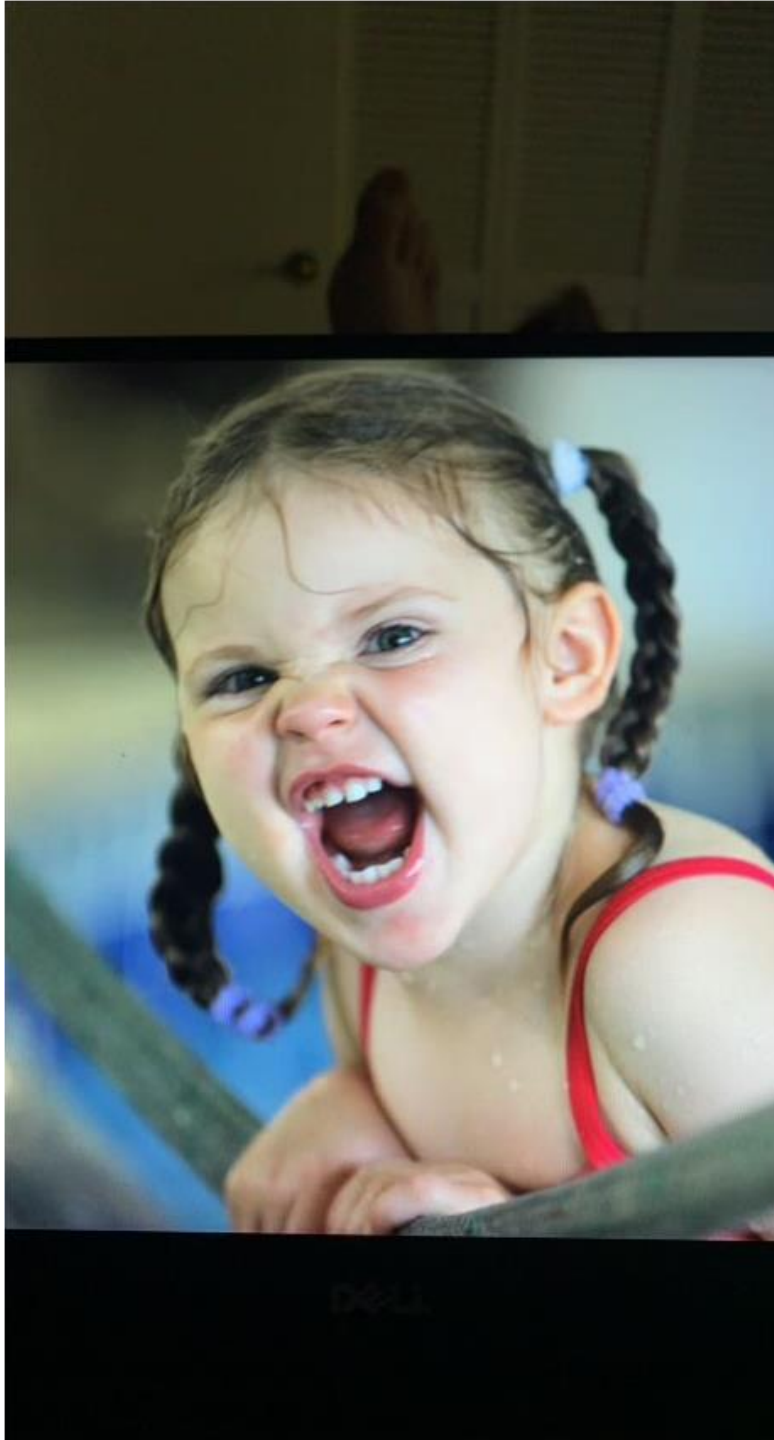
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Professor and Canada Research Chair  
Palliative Approaches to Care in Aging & Community  
Health, School of Nursing, University of Victoria, CANADA  
2023/2024 Hood Fellow, University of Auckland



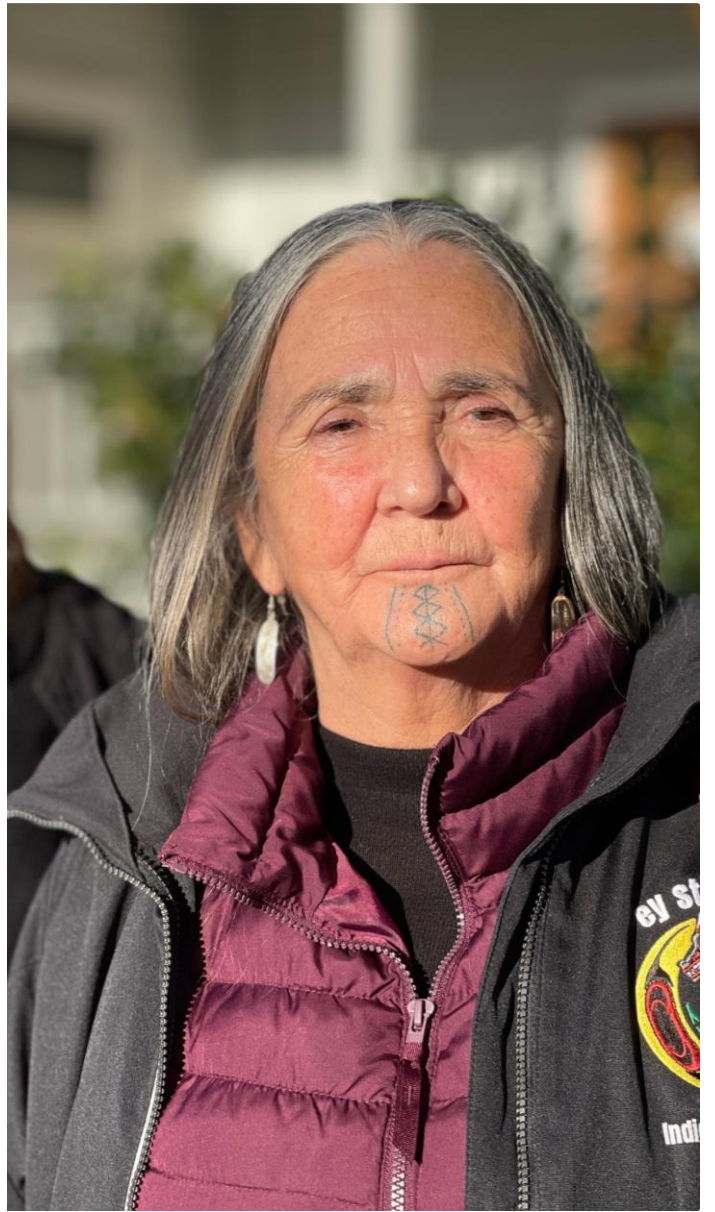
# Territorial Acknowledgement













# Equity in Palliative Approaches to Care (ePAC) Inner-City Action Team







# Check Your Language

## WORDS MATTER

### HURTFUL

- The mentally ill, psycho, crazy, lunatic
- Schizophrenic, Bipolar

### PEOPLE FIRST LANGUAGE

- People with mental health conditions
- A person living with Schizophrenia or Bipolar Disorder



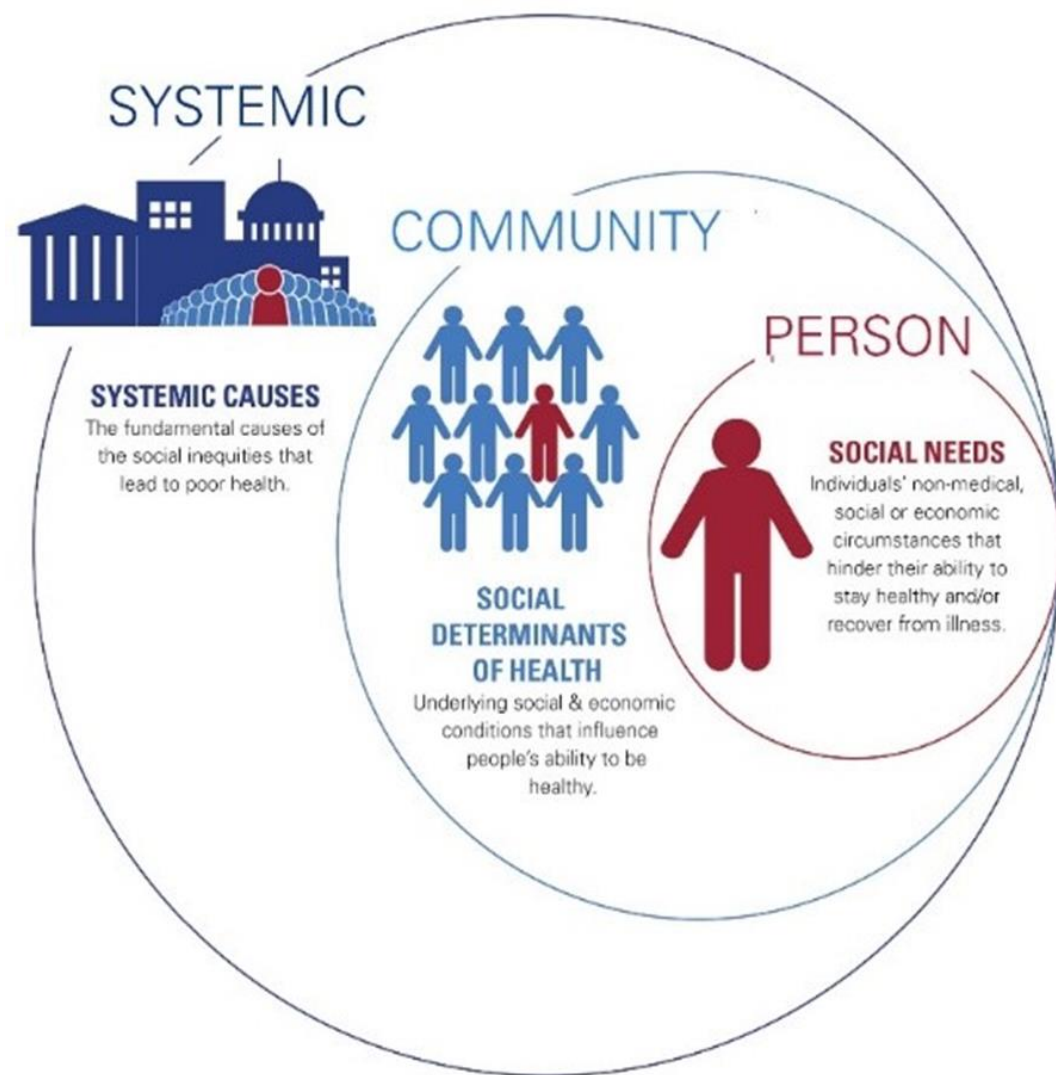
Language is the vehicle for sharing knowledge and understanding, and a means by which we can express and communicate our values to others.

Language frames how society thinks about people who experience structural vulnerability. It also frames how people at the margins think of themselves.

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Cox C, Fritz Z. Presenting complaint: use of language that disempowers patients. BMJ. 2022 Apr 27;377:e066720. doi: 10.1136/bmj-2021-066720. PMID: 35477529; PMCID: PMC9273034.







Inequities affect all people but they have especially strong impacts upon the health of those living in poverty. Adding social sciences evidence – the understanding of social structures and of power relationships – we have now accumulated indisputable evidence that ***“social injustice is killing people on a grand scale.”***





**LEAVE NO ONE BEHIND**

EQUITY IN ACCESS TO PALLIATIVE CARE

World Hospice & Palliative Care Day

Zaman, M., Espinal-Arango, A., Mohapatra, S., & Jadad, A. (2021). What would it take to die well? A systematic review of systematic reviews on the conditions for a good death. *The Lancet Health Longevity*, 2(9), e593-e600.

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dying at the preferred place

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relief from pain and psychological distress

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emotional support from loved ones

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autonomous treatment decision making

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avoidance of futile life-prolonging interventions and of being a burden to others

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right to assisted suicide or euthanasia

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effective communication with professionals

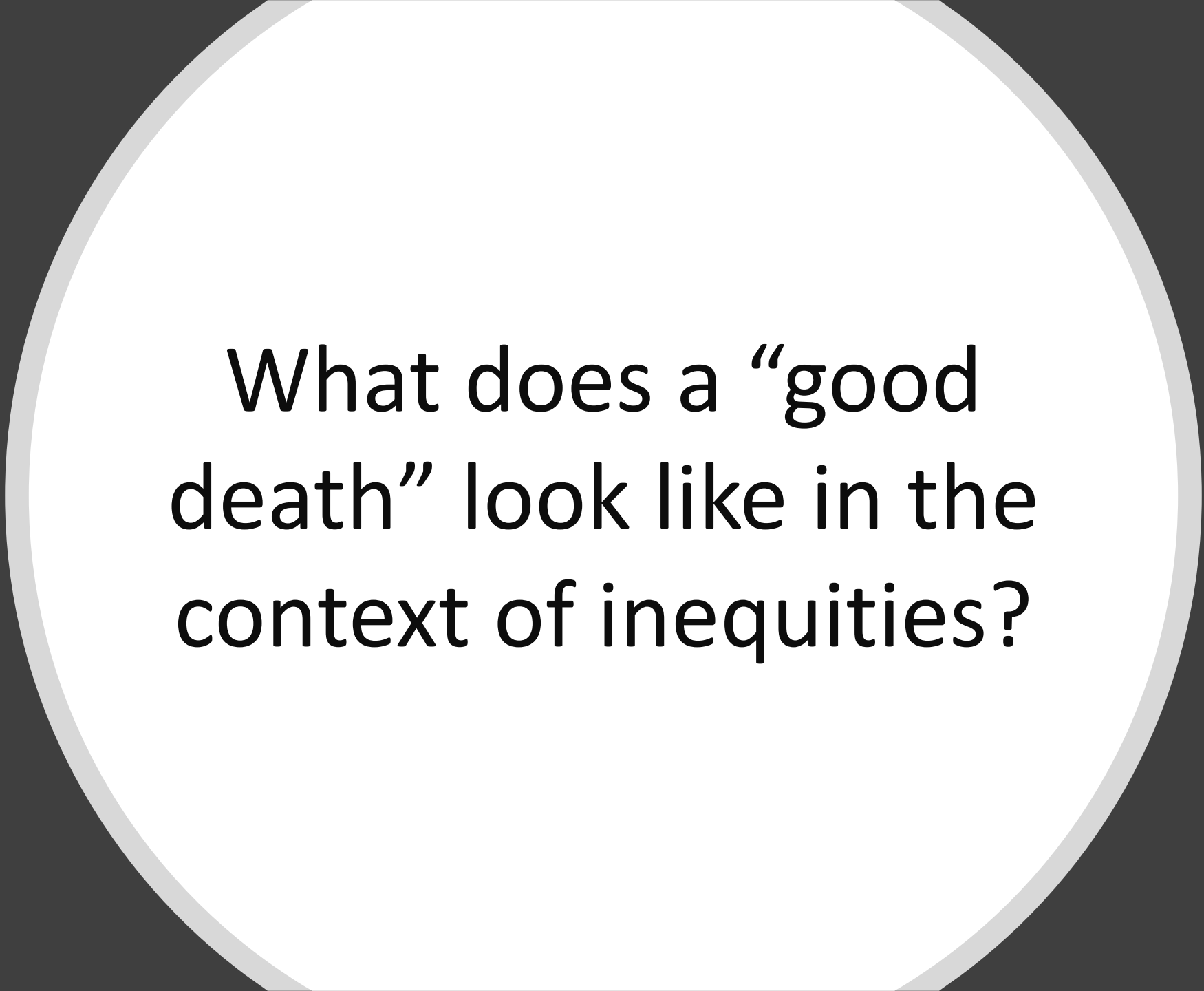
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performance of rituals



Image from Irish Hospice Foundation: <https://hospicefoundation.ie/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Dying-Well-at-Home-Report-Irish-Hospice-Foundation.pdf>





What does a “good  
death” look like in the  
context of inequities?

# What Does A “Good Death” Look Like in the Context of Inequities?

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dying at the preferred place



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relief from pain and psychological distress



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emotional support from loved ones



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autonomous treatment decision making



---

avoidance of futile life-prolonging  
interventions and of being a burden to others



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right to assisted suicide or euthanasia



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effective communication with professionals



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performance of rituals






NATIONAL POST

## One third of Canadians fine with prescribing assisted suicide for homelessness

*Roughly the same number told a poll they were fine with approving MAID for someone whose only affliction was poverty*

Tristin Hopper

Published May 16, 2023 • Last updated 6 days ago • 3 minute read

 274 Comments



A homeless encampment in Vancouver. A new Research Co. poll finds that 28 per cent of Canadians are fine with approving a homeless person's request for assisted suicide even if they

# What does a “good death” look like in the context of inequities?

Invited Editorial



## Closing the health equity gap in palliative care: The time for action is now

Kelli Stajduhar<sup>1</sup>  and Merryn Gott<sup>2</sup> 

*Palliative Medicine*  
2023, Vol. 37(4) 424–425  
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In order to “leave no one behind,” the Worldwide Hospice Palliative Care Alliance’s 2021 campaign called for governments and policymakers to prioritize equity-focused palliative care and to tackle structural inequities in end-of-life experience and bereavement. The campaign was reflective of a broader shift to address health equity driven by the recognition that, despite decades of research and health interventions, vast disparities exist in health outcomes and health care experiences both between, and within, countries. In her widely cited paper on equity in health, Whitehead<sup>1</sup> explains that health inequities are avoidable and potentially remedial differences in health

palliative care services, responds to the needs of the dying.

The collection of papers in this special issue of *Palliative Medicine* highlights recent evidence and practices, as well as the potential of research methodologies under-used within palliative care. It also points to some of the thorny issues that the field of palliative care faces in its efforts to close the health equity gap and the hard work required to get there. Indeed, the field of equity-focused palliative care is in its infancy. Modern day palliative care was developed to improve the quality of dying for those with cancer, with greater attention paid in recent years to others

**Addressing the social and structural determinants of health is a first-line palliative care intervention in contexts of inequity and is a major contributor to a “good death”.**



# Pan-Canadian Research Collaborative

**PCOAT**  
Palliative  
Care  
Outreach and  
Advocacy  
Team  
(Edmonton, AB)



**PEACH**  
Palliative  
Education  
and Care for  
the Homeless  
(Toronto, ON)



**PORT**  
Palliative  
Outreach  
Resource  
Team  
(Victoria, BC)



**CAMPP**  
Community  
Allied Mobile  
Palliative  
Partnership  
(Calgary, AB)



**PACT**  
Palliative  
Advocacy &  
Care Team  
(Thunder Bay, ON)



# How can health and social care



Ensure **equitable approaches to palliative care**, taking into account intersecting vulnerabilities?



Intervene early enough to promote **physical, emotional, social and spiritual** well-being so that people who are dying and their chosen family can live the best quality of life up until the time they die?



Prioritize **what matters most** as people are coming to the end of life?



Capitalize on the assets in our community and within our citizens to support equity-oriented palliative approaches to care and allow people to **live in the community** (if they wish) as they are dying?

## Community:

People With Lived  
Experience +  
workers +  
community  
organizations



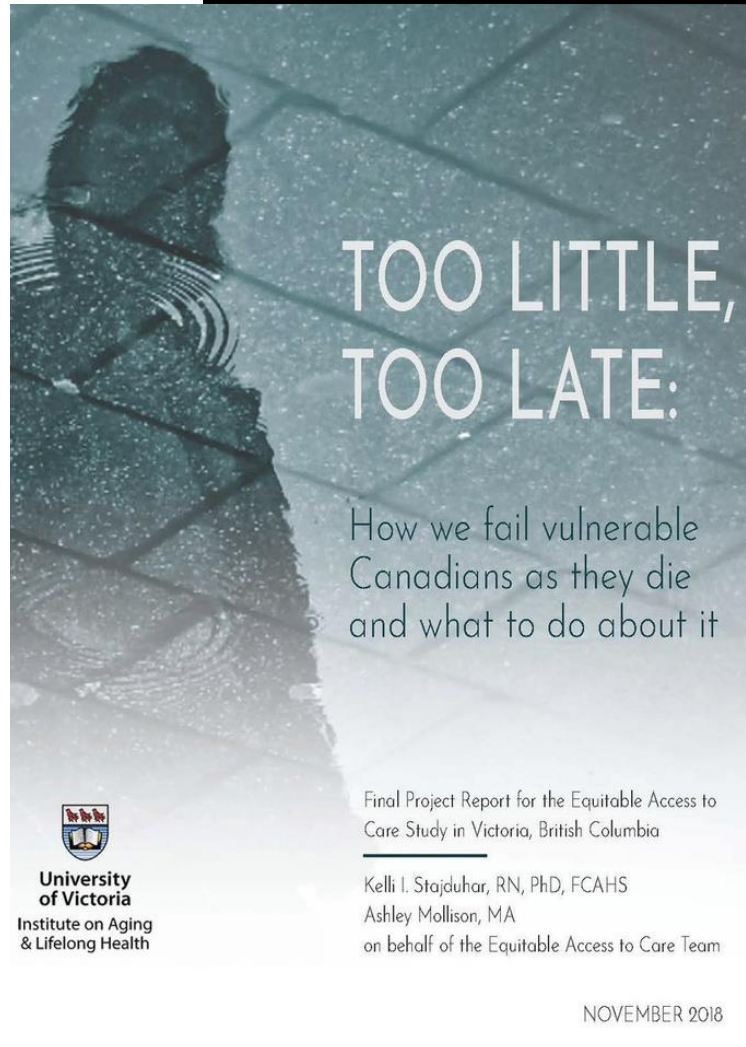
Research

Palliative  
Care +  
other health  
services









3 year study in Victoria BC, 2014-2017

Followed 25 people positioned as structurally vulnerable on a dying trajectory, support persons, service providers

Ethnography: 300+ hours of participant observation; 147 interviews

Interviewed support systems and key stakeholders

Knowledge mobilization and translation events in community

# RECOMMENDATIONS



- Address barriers in formal health care settings that prevent people from receiving diagnosis, treatment, support, and care.
- Integrate palliative approaches to care where people experiencing structural vulnerability live and die.
- Support non-traditional families (e.g., street family, inner city workers) and include them in decision-making processes and strategies.



# EPAC

Harm  
Reduction

Anti colonial foundation

Community  
Development  
+  
Capacity

\* Continued Learning \*  
\* Community Learning \*

PORT  
Clinical  
Services

Equity-Informed  
Palliative Care

Bereavement  
Loss + Grief

Psycho  
social  
Spiritual

Evidence Informed

Legal  
Ethical

Grounded in People + Community



# Palliative Outreach Resource Team (PORT)



Address barriers in formal health care settings that prevent people experiencing structural vulnerabilities from receiving diagnosis, treatment, support, and care.

- Bridge the gaps
- Serve people with life limiting condition who are having difficulty accessing palliative supports
- Consultation model in partnership with existing services



# Engaging workers and street family

Integrate palliative approaches to care where people experiencing structural vulnerability live and die.



Support non-traditional families (e.g., street family, inner-city workers) and include them in decision-making processes and strategies.



Adapted palliative care tools and resources

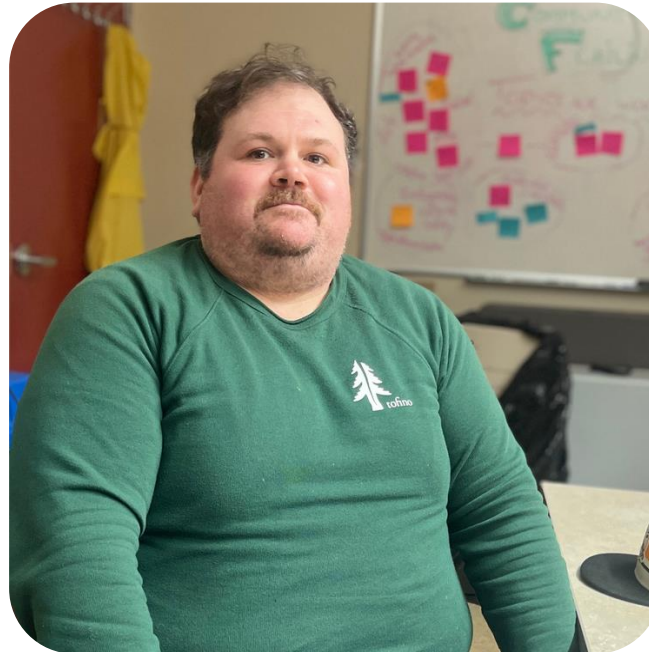
# ePAC Retreat

Friday, November 10

10am-4pm

Gallery Room, Brentwood Bay Resort & Spa

849 Verdier Ave, Brentwood Bay







Sneaking someone's cat  
into the hospital

#thisispalliativecare



Finding a banana for  
someone who can't eat  
solid food

#thisispalliativecare



Giving someone  
Christmas in October

#thisispalliativecare



Going to the store to  
get cigarettes when  
someone can't go  
themselves

#thisispalliativecare



Helping someone get  
access drugs to help  
manage their pain

#thisispalliativecare



Getting an artist the  
tools to do their craft

#thisispalliativecare



# Contact Us!

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 IALH, University of Victoria

 X @access2care

 YouTube @palliative\_approaches

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# Innovating Care:

## Research and Action for Public Health and Palliative Care

4th International Research Seminar  
EAPC Reference Group on Public  
Health and Palliative Care



June 17-19, 2025



University of Victoria,  
Victoria, B.C. , Canada



eapcirs2025@uvic.ca

