



Hospice and Palliative Care in Home Care Settings

**A pilot project by Hospice Austria in cooperation
with four home care organizations in Vienna (June 2015 – June 2018)**

When asked, most Austrians indicate their home as the preferred place of death, but the reality is different. 70% of the patients are dying in institutions, because the conditions are not ideal for staying at home until the end with fatal diseases. Professional carers, i.e. the employees of home care organizations, (85% are female and in Vienna 70% with migration background) have to carry a lot of physical or psychic burden. A competent care at home until the end requires close cooperation with relatives, family doctors, hospice and palliative care services, the rescue service and volunteers. But the care givers have no paid working time for this kind of cooperation. Advance Care Planning is another important issue without funding. Care givers cannot dispose of their time in a flexible way and getting granted applying for more time of care by the funding authority can last up to ten days. In many cases there is no continuity of care. If there are many caring for the same patient everyone involved is overstrained and the documentation is overloaded.

Four organizations offering home care, **Arbeiter Samariter Bund Vienna, Caritas Vienna, CS Caritas Socialis and Volkshilfe Vienna**, intended to make a change and took part in the pilot project. They rated cooperation higher than competition and closely worked together. The three year project included elements like the development of indicators for the integration of hospice and palliative care in the home care area, developing a curriculum for the training of the employees, a concept for the organizational development to integrate hospice and palliative care sustainably. The objective of the project was to significantly improve the working situation of the home care givers when responsible for seriously or terminally ill patients. It was assumed that in the long run this would have positive consequences for the patients and their loved ones, too.

The evaluation of the project was done by the NPO Institute – Competence Center for Nonprofit Organizations und Social Entrepreneurship of the Vienna University for Economics and Business Administration. Univ. Prof. Dr. Ralph Grossmann contributed his abundant

competence and experience in organizational development. The Fonds Gesundes Österreich (FGÖ) was the main sponsor. FGÖ is the national competence center and central funding office for health promotion and one of the three business units of Gesundheit Österreich GmbH.

The results are quite impressive so far. The care givers feel much more confident and competent when working with seriously or terminally ill patients and their beloved ones. They are better able to assess when to involve a hospice or palliative care team or not. They have the competence to organize and conduct advance care planning. They appreciate that they have more support in their organization by the palliative care representatives and that their superiors stand for a sustainable development of hospice and palliative care.

To offer competent and sustainable care at home until the end requires a change of some circumstances. As these changes are far beyond the possibilities of the care givers and their organization, political decision makers are asked to step in so that the often used slogan 'outpatient care takes precedence over inpatient care' can become more real.

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