ZonMw palliative care programme

Over 100,000 people die in the Netherlands every year as a result of an incurable disease or chronic disorder. Not everyone is able to die where they would like to, and patients do not all receive the same standard of palliative care. ZonMw’s palliative care programme (known in Dutch as Palliantie) is designed to improve this situation.

The National Palliative Care Programme (NPPZ)
Palliative care in the Netherlands is fragmented, in terms of care practice, research and training. This prompted the government to establish the National Palliative Care Programme (NPPZ). The programme is managed by a steering group with members representing the health ministry, all the professional groups concerned, health insurance companies and interest groups. The steering group monitors progress towards the objectives and issues recommendations on the introduction of results and changes to policy. Seven regional palliative care consortiums have also been set up, all of them including professionals involved in research, healthcare and training. They collaborate on a regional basis, make recommendations on improvements to care, exchange knowledge and experience and implement best practice.

ZonMw ‘Palliantie’ programme
ZonMw’s palliative care programme (known as Palliantie), which focuses on achieving a noticeable improvement in palliative care for patients and their families, is part of the NPPZ. The principle is that care should cater better for the needs and wishes of people in the final stage of life and their families. With initiatives in research, practice and training, the programme helps the development and dissemination of knowledge, and facilitates collaboration and the sharing of best practice. The programme also fosters international scientific collaboration on comparative studies. The Dutch government is investing over 50 million euro between 2014 and 2020.

The role of ZonMw
The Palliantie programme is intended to set in motion a change in the way care professionals, patients and families think and act. ZonMw is funding projects that focus on the four themes, involving activities associated with research, practice and training. Every project must consider the following principles:

- Quality of life and a dignified death are key. The needs of patients in the final phase of life and their families play an important role. This also includes bereavement counselling.
- Physical, psychological, social and spiritual factors must be taken into account and support offered in these areas (holistic view of palliative care).
- Patients (and their families) must have as much control over their own life as possible in the final stages.
- Care providers must arrange palliative care as close to home as possible.
- Extra consideration must be given to informal carers.
- Palliative care should be part of regular healthcare provision.
Four themes in research, training and care practice
The programme is based on four themes, with activities involving research, training and care practice.

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Matrix NPPZ

**Awareness and culture**
‘Awareness and culture’ includes efforts to break the taboo on death and focus more attention on how people experience the final stage of life. It is also vital that care providers recognise the palliative phase, as palliative care involves much more than simply guiding someone through the terminal stages of their illness.

**Organisation and continuity of care**
‘Organisation and continuity of care’ covers things like the sharing of responsibilities between generalist and specialist care providers, and efficient handovers between care providers when patients in the final phase of life are relocated.

**Care innovations and standards**
‘Care innovations and standards’ involves things like interventions for specific groups (from migrants to people with a learning disability) and implementing best practice.

**Patient participation**
‘Patient participation’ covers issues like joint decision-making and involving patients and their families in projects.

Further information
To find out more about the National Palliative Care Programme and the Palliantie programme, go to www.zonmw.eu/palliativecare for information on
– the mission and goals of the programme
– the themes and activities in the programme
– the Palliantie programme document