Despite additional value from palliative care, many people face concerns about services. The INTEGRATE-HTA project is developing new Health Technology Assessment (HTA) methods to assess complex care technologies and palliative care. Stakeholder consultation helps identify issues important and ensure the research is real value.

**Background**
Many people face limiting illnesses benefit from palliative care but services vary widely across Europe. The project is developing new HTA methods for assessing complex technologies and palliative care. Stakeholder consultation helps identify issues important and ensure the research is real value.

**Aim**
To identify and compare topics identified by stakeholders in palliative care systems across six European countries to inform a Health Technology Assessment.

**Methods**
Professionals (service commissioners, practitioners from a range of settings and academics) in six European countries were consulted. Co-ordinators in three countries (in Germany, Italy & the Netherlands) used various qualitative research approaches and conducted a total of 44 face-face and/or focus group interviews. Co-ordinators in three countries (England, Norway and Poland) engaged a total of 79 stakeholders as ‘research partners’ individually and/or in focus groups. An adapted version of the EUUneth HTA core model guided face-face individual or small group discussions and subsequent organisation of advice to identify key issues.

**Findings**
- Despite concerns about how well understood the term ‘palliative care’ is amongst society/public as well as professionals, there was agreement across countries that the holistic nature of palliative care has some benefits for patients, their families, and the public.
- The funding of palliative care services, the costs to patients and carers/families, and identifying economic benefits of palliative care were of concern to stakeholders. The need for evidence regarding the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of palliative care was a shared concern across countries.
- Although specific problems relating to common topics differ for each country, stakeholders in several countries raised concerns about the availability and accessibility of palliative care services and resources, notably for ethnic minority groups and people living in rural areas, amongst others. Across countries, it was noted that the organisation of palliative care services requires attention.
- Additional concerns exist about palliative care provision for people with non-malignant diseases and over treatment at the end of life. Ethical concerns about autonomy, whole truth telling to patients and decision making were also identified.

**Discussion**
Despite complex differences in the context and provision of palliative care across Europe, some common topics relating to palliative care were identified. However, the nature and manifestation of some topics seem to be country-specific. The findings will be used to inform the research questions for the HTA as stakeholder involvement helps to ensure the findings are of use to the palliative care community.

**Conclusion**
Despite differences in palliative care provision across Europe, common topics for an HTA exist. Stakeholder involvement to identify both country-specific and common topics enhances the cultural sensitivity of the project scope.

**References**

For more information please visit www.integrate-hta.eu