Nordic Specialist Course in Palliative Medicine

Regulations for the NSCPM Course project

The NSCPM is aimed at doctors in the forefront of palliative medicine in the Nordic countries. These physicians will play an important part in developing the field in their countries. Research should therefore be an integrated part of their specialist training, and a limited research project is included in the course.

Aims for the course project:
The student should
1. aquire basic knowledge about research in palliative medicine, including main research topics, designs, and methods
2. develop a positive attitude to research in palliative medicine as well as an understanding of research ethics and of the challenges related to research in a palliative care population
3. be able to plan a limited study, do literature searches, critically appraise the literature, write a protocol, carry out the study according to the protocol, and summarize, analyse and present the results.

Nature of projects
The project can be a research project, or a project related to quality assurance or implementation. The methodology may be quantitative or qualitative.

Three types of projects are recommended:
- An audit
- A literature review, or a clinical guideline based on a systematic literature review
- A limited research project

Students already having an ongoing research project related to palliative medicine, may use this, provided it is their own work.
Two students may work together on a project, but not more than two.

Work and follow-up on the project

Module 1: Introduction to the course project (2 days)
Learning outcome: The participant plans a course project
Contents:
- Overview of the development and present challenges in palliative care research

Norwegian Association for Palliative Medicine

SPLY Suomen palliatiivisen lääketieteen yhdistys
Finnish Association for Palliative Medicine

DSPaM Dansk Selskab for Palliativ Medicin
Danish Association for Palliative Medicine

lifid Samtök um líknandi meðferð
Icelandic Association for Palliative Care

SVENSK FÖRENING FÖR PALLIATIV MEDICIN
Swedish Association for Palliative Medicine

- Introduction to qualitative and quantitative research methods
- Research ethics
- Literature searches and critical reading
- How to write a protocol
- Planning of own project

In addition to lectures and group work, former students tell about their experiences with the course project. Examples of protocols are shown and discussed. Project ideas are discussed in plenum and in groups several times during the week, including a final group session on the last day of the module.

The assignment after Module 1 is to find a tutor, make an agreement with the tutor and write a description of the project (protocol). A **summary of the project description** should be submitted within two months to the steering group member(s) responsible for the projects. The summary should be 1-2 A4pages, divided into the following sections: Background, Aims and objectives, Materials and methods, Timetable and program, A few important references.

The student has the responsibility to find a tutor. The tutor should preferably have a PhD degree or other relevant research experience, but the choice of tutor also depends upon the nature and topic of the project. The student may well have two tutors, e.g. one experienced in palliative medicine and one in relevant methodology.
The National Associations for Palliative Medicine should assist the students in finding a suitable tutor.

The project is the responsibility of the student, with the help of the tutor(s).

A Tutor Agreement Form has been developed, and we expect the students to use this template. The form is attached as an appendix to the present document, and gives guidance for the student's work on the project.

Modules 2 and 3
Students should be asked about their projects during these two modules, and be encouraged to contact the Steering Group in case of problems.

Module 4
A group session is devoted to follow-up of the projects. All students report on the progress of their projects in the group, and the responsible Steering Group member visits all groups. The main objective is to identify students having problems and give them assistance as needed.

Module 5
The same procedure as in Module 4.

Module 6
When coming to Module 6,
- A clinical audit should be completed, with a written report

- A literature review should be completed, with a written report
- Clinical guidelines based on a literature review should be completed, with a written guideline
- A research project should have an approved, written protocol, and some patients must be included in the study

During Module 6, all projects are to be presented by a **written abstract** of one page and an **oral presentation** in a scientific session. A full written report on the project is not required.

The abstract and presentation should be structured as follows:
Background, Aim, Methods, Results, Short discussion, Conclusion

The students are divided into two groups for the presentations. The sessions are chaired by members of the Steering Group, mimicking real conference sessions.
The oral presentation should be given as a power-point presentation. Each student is given 12 minutes for the presentation, followed by 7 minutes for discussion. Two students working together will have 20 minutes for the presentation and 10 minutes for discussion.

The abstracts and presentations are evaluated by two members of the Steering Group. Both the abstract and the oral presentation must have acceptable clarity and quality, and show what the student actually has done.

A completed project is a requirement to pass the course.

After Module 6, the abstracts and project presentations (power-point files) are placed on the course website.

The students are encouraged to submit their work to an EAPC conference or other scientific meeting. It is also a goal that the results from some of the projects are published in scientific journals.

NSCPM Steering Group, May 2012, revised April 2019

Tutor Agreement Form
Nordic Specialist Course in Palliative Medicine (NSCPM)

This form is a proposal for a Tutor Agreement Form. The content can be modified individually. Prior to filling in this form, the student and tutor have agreed on the subject and method of the project.

The responsibility for the completion of the project lies entirely with the student!

Initial phase

1. **The student** sends a proposal for the <u>protocol</u> to the tutor in due time (at least 4 weeks) before the deadline for submitting the study protocol to the course leaders

2. **The tutor** reviews this <u>protocol</u> thoroughly with a focus on relevance, feasibility, and scope of a project for the NSCPM, in time for the student to make necessary changes

3. **The student and tutor** agree at this time upon a <u>time table</u> with milestones for the tasks of the project. (The tasks will vary according to the type of project, e.g. literature search, preparing intervention/data collection, data collection, data analysis, writing study report, writing abstract, preparing presentation.)

Study period

4. **The student** sends a <u>status</u> of the work on the project according to the time table to the tutor, at least before each module 2 - 5 of the NSCPM

5. **The tutor** reacts and gives guidance if the student gets behind the agreed time table

Final phase

6. **The student** sends a full <u>study report</u> to the tutor according to the agreed time table

7. **The tutor** approves the <u>study report</u>. (The full study report is not approved by the course leaders)

8. **The student** sends a proposal for the <u>abstract and presentation</u> to the tutor in due time (at least 4 weeks) before Module 6 of the NSCPM

9. **The tutor** reviews the <u>abstract</u> thoroughly with a focus on form, presentation of the project and coherence between aim and results / conclusion, in time for the student to make necessary changes

10. **The tutor** reviews the <u>presentation</u> thoroughly together with the student with a focus on form, presentation of the project and time limit, in time for the student to make necessary changes

Overall

11. The cooperation between the student and the tutor can be terminated from both tutor and student if the above agreement is not followed.

Other specific agreements:

Place and date: Place and date:

_____   _____
(Signature of NSCPM student)   *(Signature of tutor)*