# Nordic Specialist Course in Palliative Medicine



## 10th Nordic Specialist Course in Palliative Medicine, 2021-2023

This course is a joint venture between the Associations for Palliative Medicine in the Nordic countries for a theoretical specialist training course in 6 modules.

### **Background**

During the last decades, an increasing awareness of the need for a defined area of medicine to take care of patients with advanced, life-threatening disease has emerged in all the Nordic countries. Official reports have been published that give recommendations for the establishment of specialist palliative care services nation-wide, and an increasing number of palliative care programs are being set up. Palliative medicine has been approved as a formal competence field in Finland (2007), Norway (2011) and Denmark (2013). Sweden (2015) and Iceland (2017) both have palliative medicine as an add-on-specialty; Norway will soon follow. However, despite these advances there is still a considerable shortness of physicians with experience and education in this field of medicine, and we are facing the situation that new palliative care units and programs might be established without the appropriate medical staffing. This situation, therefore, presents a need to educate doctors in the Nordic countries in palliative medicine at a specialist level.

The Nordic Specialist Course in Palliative Medicine was created in 2001-2002, and the first course started in October 2003. Since then, a new course has started every second year. The 9th course will end in September 2021. Due to the great interest in the course and the ongoing need for more specialists in palliative medicine, a 10th course will start in November 2021.

The task force initially planning the course decided to use the British Curriculum in Palliative Medicine, level C, (1) as the basis for the course content, as all other palliative medicine curricula more or less were based on this. Attention was also paid to the Swedish Curriculum (2). Since the first course, the course content has been constantly evolving based on developments in the field of palliative medicine, revised curricula and recommendations for education in palliative medicine (3-7), and feedback from course participants and teachers.

### The present course

The plan for the 10th course is presented as learning outcomes and related course content, in line with modern educational theory and guidelines.



Norwegian Association for Palliative Medicine



Palliative Medicine

DSPAM

Dansk Selskab for Palliativ Medicin

Danish Association for

Palliative Medicine



Icelandic Association for Palliative Care



Swedish Association for Palliative Medicine



The course is aimed at doctors in the forefront of palliative medicine, who will play an important part in developing the field in their countries. Applicants must have specialist approval in a clinical specialty (see national application forms for specifications), be working in palliative care, intend to continue working in palliative care, and must present a time line for how they plan to obtain the highest possible recognition in palliative medicine in their country (formal competence field or add-on specialty).

The Nordic Specialist Course is a theoretical course giving a deepened understanding of the different topics that together compose the field of palliative medicine. The course is not intended to deliver a complete cookbook on 'how to do', but rather provide an expanded framework to stimulate the participants to independently take a closer look at details. This structure presupposes a high degree of activity and responsibility from the participants, including studies of the course literature, articles, and assignments between the modules. Research is regarded an important part of specialist training, and a limited research project is included in the course.

#### Overall goals for the course and corresponding clinical training

After completing the course and the clinical training, the participant

- 1. identifies her/himself as a palliative care physician
- 2. has acquired the competency to work as a consultant in a specialist palliative care setting
- 3. is able to critically reflect on her/his own practice

#### Course Content 2021-2023

The course is planned for face-to-face modules. Although most unwillingly, this plan may have to be subject to changes due to the uncertainties caused by the Covid-19 pandemic and its consequences.

#### **MODULE 1 – 22-26 November 2021, Trondheim, Norway**

A Introduction to palliative medicine	
Learning outcome:	The participant explains the characteristics, advantages and limitations of palliative medicine.
Contents:	<ul><li>Concepts and definitions</li><li>Core values</li></ul>
B Introduction to course project	
Learning outcome:	The participant plans a course project.
Contents:	<ul> <li>Overview of the development and present challenges in palliative care research</li> <li>Introduction to qualitative and quantitative research methods</li> <li>Research ethics</li> <li>Literature searches and critical reading</li> <li>How to write a protocol</li> <li>Planning of own project</li> </ul>



C Symptom management in palliative care, with special reference to cancer	
Learning outcome:	The participant identifies, assesses and manages symptoms in patients
	with palliative care needs.
Contents:	<ul> <li>Symptom identification and assessment, including in the cognitively impaired</li> </ul>
	Assessment tools
	<ul> <li>Management of common symptoms and conditions</li> </ul>
	<ul> <li>Oncological treatment modalities in palliative care</li> </ul>
	<ul> <li>Surgical palliative care interventions</li> </ul>

# MODULE 2 – 25-29 April 2022, Malmö, Sweden

A Communication	
Learning outcome:	The participant communicates efficiently and empathetically with
	patients, relatives and health care professionals.
Contents:	Introduction to role plays
	<ul> <li>Training of communication skills of increasing difficulty, e.g.</li> </ul>
	<ul> <li>Getting a good start</li> </ul>
	<ul> <li>Agenda setting</li> </ul>
	<ul> <li>How to elicit the patient's perspective</li> </ul>
	<ul> <li>Track emotional and cognitive data</li> </ul>
	<ul> <li>Articulate empathy</li> </ul>
	<ul> <li>Checking patient preference concerning information</li> </ul>
	<ul> <li>How to normalize the patient's feelings and thoughts</li> </ul>
	How to summarize
	Talking about serious news  Talking about the action to a serious factors are a serious factors.
	Talking about transition to end-of-life care  Talking about diving
	<ul> <li>Talking about dying</li> </ul>
B Ethics	
Learning outcome:	The participant identifies, analyses and manages ethical dilemmas in palliative care.
Contents:	<ul> <li>Ethics viewed as a critical reflection on human agency; meta- ethics, normative ethics and professional ethics</li> </ul>
	<ul> <li>Ethics as an art that translates personal convictions into action:</li> <li>Virtues in medical practice</li> </ul>
	Ethics as a set of core values: professional codes of ethics
	The nature of the patient-physician relationship
	Medical anthropology of palliative care
	<ul> <li>Value and communication exercises</li> </ul>
C Teamwork	
Learning outcomes:	The participant understands the difference between a group and a team.
	The participant reflects on her / his role in the interdisciplinary team
	and contributes to the development of the team.



Contents:	Defining groups and different types of teams
	Teaming as concept
	Team development
	Accountability in teams
	Handling team conflicts
D Palliative care in frail elderly and in patients with dementia:	
Learning outcome:	The participant identifies, assesses and manages symptoms and
	palliative care needs in frail elderly and patients with dementia.
Contents:	Different types of dementias and their central characteristics
	Ethical issues
	Task-centred versus person-centred care
	Advance care planning
	Management of behavioural, psychiatric and somatic symptoms

# MODULE 3 – 26-30 September 2022, Bergen, Norway

A Decision-making	
Learning outcome:	The participant applies relevant principles and regulations for decision-making in patients with and without decision-making capacity.
Contents:	<ul> <li>Principles and national regulations</li> <li>Decision-making in patients with and without decision-making capacity</li> <li>Advance care planning</li> </ul>
B Emergencies	
Learning outcome:	The participant identifies, analyses and manages emergencies in palliative medicine.
Contents:	Emergencies in palliative medicine
	Palliative orthopaedic surgery
C Complementary an	d alternative treatments
Learning outcomes:	The participant explains the difference between alternative and complementary treatments and the laws and regulations regarding their use.  The participant communicates about the use of complementary and alternative treatments with her/his patient, and reflects on her/his own attitude to these treatment modalities.
Contents:	<ul> <li>Concepts, definitions, epidemiology</li> <li>Legal aspects</li> <li>Examples of common practice, effects and side effects</li> <li>Useful web-resources</li> <li>Communication about these modalities and reflection on own attitudes</li> </ul>
D Organisation of palliative care in the Nordic Countries	
Learning outcome:	The participant explains the organisation of palliative care in her/his



<del>-</del>
country and her/his place in the organisation.
<ul> <li>Organisation of palliative care in the Nordic countries</li> </ul>
ing
The participant describes factors promoting learning and applies them
to own teaching.
The participant is able to plan a learning session.
Learning theory
<ul> <li>Factors to consider when planning a learning session. Learning</li> </ul>
outcomes
Cooperative learning structures
Planning a learning session
Presentation techniques. Practice session
Evaluation of teaching and learning
The participant makes a care plan for a patient with a non-healing
wound.
Holistic assessment and treatment options for the patient with a
non-healing wound
Making a care plan

## MODULE 4 – 21-25 November 2022, Turku, Finland

A The imminently dy	ing
Learning outcomes:	The participant recognizes a dying patient, makes appropriate decisions concerning the care and manages symptoms.  Moreover, the participant has the confidence to accompany the dying patient and the relatives, being aware of her/his own limitations.
Contents:	<ul> <li>The dying process: signs and symptoms, pharmacological management</li> <li>Ethical dilemmas (e.g., hydration, nutrition, withdrawing/ withholding treatment)</li> <li>Spirituality and existential issues</li> <li>Care for the relatives and carers</li> <li>Coping with emotional stress in yourself and in your team</li> </ul>
B Audit	
Learning outcome:	The participant is able to perform a clinical audit.
Contents:	<ul> <li>The principles and practice of different types of audits</li> <li>Exercises on the audit cycle</li> <li>Real-life examples of audit in palliative care settings</li> </ul>

## **MODULE 5 – 23-27 January 2023, Elsinore, Denmark**

A Communication	
Learning outcome:	The participant communicates efficiently and empathetically with



	patients, relatives and health care professionals.
Contents:	<ul> <li>As in Module 2, but with increasing difficulty</li> </ul>
B Pain	
Learning outcome:	The participant assesses, evaluates and treats different types of pain.
Contents:	Classification and assessment of pain
	Drug treatment principles
	<ul> <li>Invasive techniques</li> </ul>
	<ul> <li>Radiotherapy and bisphosphonates</li> </ul>
	Non-pharmacological pain treatment
	<ul> <li>Strategies in difficult pain management including palliative sedation</li> </ul>

# MODULE 6 – 24-28 April 2023, Stockholm, Sweden

A Management, orga	A Management, organisation	
Learning outcome:	The participant describes how to set up a palliative care program.	
Contents:	Different organisational models for palliative care programs	
	Management	
	<ul> <li>Differentiation between clinical and management issues</li> </ul>	
	<ul> <li>International organisations</li> </ul>	
	Networking	
	Clinical guidelines	
B Palliative care in er	nd-stage organ failure and progressive neurological conditions	
Learning outcome:	The participant identifies, assesses and manages symptoms and	
	palliative care needs in patients with end-stage organ failure and	
	progressive neurological conditions.	
Contents:	Congestive heart failure	
	Chronic progressive pulmonary diseases	
	End-stage renal and hepatic diseases	
	<ul> <li>ALS and other progressive, neurological diseases.</li> </ul>	
C Introduction to peo	liatric palliative care	
Learning outcome:	The participant recognizes the special aspects concerning palliative care	
	in children.	
Contents:	Overview of pediatric specialist palliative care	
D Course project		
Learning outcome:	The participant has carried out a course project and presents the results	
	orally and in a written abstract, both in English.	
Contents:	Presentation of own project	
	<ul> <li>Evaluation and feedback (colleagues and teachers)</li> </ul>	
E Examination and course evaluation		
Contents:	Three-hour written, unseen exam	
	Oral and written course evaluation	



#### References

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- 3. Recommendations of the European Association for Palliative Care for the development of postgraduate Curricula Leading to Certification in Palliative Medicine. Report of the EAPC Task Force on Medical Education. EAPC 2009.
- 4. Specialty Training Curriculum for Palliative Medicine. London: Joint Royal Colleges of Physicians Training Board, 2010, amended 2014. <a href="https://www.gmc-uk.org/-/media/documents/dc10694-app-palliative-medicine-curriculum-75606940.pdf">https://www.gmc-uk.org/-/media/documents/dc10694-app-palliative-medicine-curriculum-75606940.pdf</a>
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#### **Practical information**

#### **Course secretariat**

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Course web site

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#### **Entry requirements and selection of participants**

The course is planned for a total of 38 participants. Applicants should have completed specialist training in a recognized medical specialty and possess knowledge and skills corresponding to level B of the palliative medicine curriculum (Ref. 1-2).

The national associations will consider and nominate participants among the applicants from their respective countries. The Steering Committee makes the final selection. Applicants will be notified early June 2021.

#### **Economy**

The fee for each of the six course modules will be Euro 1100 (total course fee: Euro 6600). A deposit of Euro 1100 should be effected no later than 30 days after the notification of a successful application, and each module should be paid in advance.

Costs for travel and accommodation must be added.

Every participant is responsible for funding her/his course expenses. At the time of application, the applicant should ideally have obtained permission and provide evidence of guaranteed payment of the course costs, or be able to adequately demonstrate how she/he will finance the course.

#### **Duration and organisation of training**

The duration of specialist training in Palliative Medicine is 2-2.5 years, including the 6 modules of the Nordic Specialist Course in Palliative Medicine and clinical training. The duration of clinical training will differ between the Nordic countries, but will include work in specialist palliative care units or teams where the full range of services is provided in different settings, e.g., in-patient care, day care, home care, bereavement services. The program to which the participant is appointed will have named consultant trainers (educational supervisors) for each element of the program.

#### Research project

A limited research project is included in the course. Each course participant needs to find a tutor to assist on the project. The project may be quantitative or qualitative, in the form of a survey, an audit, development of a clinical guideline, or conducting a literature review. The task will be introduced in the first module and attended to in every module, with special emphasis on Modules 3 and 5 and presentation of projects orally and by a written abstract on Module 6. Participants already having an on-going project may use this, provided it is their own work (not more than two candidates working together).

Course participants need to be aware of the time and effort required to complete the project.

#### Assignments and exam

An assignment will be given at the end of each module and must be handed in, at the latest, 4 weeks after the module. The assignments will be graded: Pass/Not pass.

A final evaluation of each participant and exam will be performed at the end of the course. Participants will receive a written proof (diploma) that they have passed the course.

To obtain this document, the exam, all assignments and the course project must be passed, and the participant must have been present at least 90% of the course.



#### Course evaluation

Each module will be consecutively evaluated by the participants and the Steering Committee. A final evaluation will be performed at the end of the course.

#### **Course Steering Committee**

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