

Integrating Palliative Care and Intensive Care: Different Concepts and Organizational Models Based on a Mixed-methods Study on Professionals' Perspectives

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Background: The integration of palliative care (PC) in intensive care (IC) requires a careful consideration of concepts and organizational models.

Aims: To understand professionals' perspectives about the integration of PC and IC; to assess what organizational models are preferred by these professionals.

Methods: Nationwide mixed-methods study, combining interviews and a questionnaire. Concepts and organizational models were explored during interviews. A questionnaire built de novo complemented this by assessing 8 organizational dimensions with an 11-point Likert scale. A combination of purposive and snowball sampling was applied until reaching theoretical saturation. 38 professionals working in Portuguese PC and IC units participated in this study. A thematic analysis was performed to the transcripts of interviews and descriptive analyses to quantitative data.

Results: Professionals had different concepts of integration. While intensivists considered the integration as a way of improving end-of-life care in IC units, PC professionals defined it as a way of promoting patient-centered care. In terms of organizational models, PC professionals defended a consultation model, introducing the role of a specialized PC team in articulation with the IC team. IC professionals preferred an education model, fostering their own competences in PC. Responses given to the questionnaire showed that the organizational dimensions most valued by both PC and IC professionals were patient-centered care and PC needs assessment in IC.

Conclusions: InPalln is the first research study addressing the integration of PC in IC in Portugal. The combination of research methods provides a greater understanding yield. Findings show

differences in concepts and preferred organizational models for integration between IC and PC professionals. Tailored strategies are needed to foster the successful integration of PC in IC.

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