



King's College London School of Medicine
Department of Palliative Care, Policy & Rehabilitation

MSc, Diploma and Certificate in Palliative Care

Entry 2010

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St Christopher's Hospice

Course Introduction & Overview

The MSc, Diploma and Certificate are a joint development between Guy's, King's and St. Thomas's Schools of Medicine and St. Christopher's Hospice. Their underpinning philosophy is to develop the skills necessary to appraise research and evidence on issues of palliative care in order to inform your clinical practice, where appropriate. We hope you will develop a knowledge and understanding of the many clinical, social and ethical issues in palliative care, and their assessment and management. Importantly, you will also acquire the skills required to critically appraise both existing and new treatments and to carry out your own research. All the research and statistics teaching is specifically geared to palliative care research issues. The course commences in January of each year. The teaching is held at King's College London, Denmark Hill site and St Christopher's Hospice in Sydenham.

- The courses are multi-professional because we wish to reflect the multi-professional nature of palliative care and provide an opportunity for different professionals to learn together. We believe the different working experiences and cultures students bring with them will enhance the entirety of the course. Importantly, much of the work throughout the course will therefore relate to your own personal experiences and many of the case studies used will be your own. Similarly, you are also asked to relate problems in clinical management, research and ethics back to your own working environments and culture.
- The courses require you to prepare case material and undertake reading before and after the taught components of modules – this is because we aim to ensure that the aspects covered reflect your clinical experience and learning needs.
- Sessions that include a practical component, such as examining a relevant research paper and presenting this, or preparing other work, are often popular. We aim to achieve a mix of lectures, workshop and group work throughout the course.

MSc, Diploma and Certificate Learning Outcomes

1. A detailed knowledge and understanding of research methods and statistics applied to palliative care.
2. The skills necessary to appraise existing research and develop and execute methodologically robust projects in your own work setting or country (often in collaboration with others)
3. An advanced knowledge and understanding of the principles and practice of palliative care, the contribution of different disciplines and biological, ethical, and cultural issues.
4. Enhanced skills in evidenced-based clinical practice, teaching and service development in palliative care.
5. The attitudes and knowledge to take palliative care forward.

Study Routes for the MSc, Diploma and Certificate in Palliative Care

Qualification	Module requirement	Assessment	Timescale
Certificate in Palliative Care	Students are required to attend a total of two core modules and one optional module within the same subject area. In both scenarios, we highly recommend that students attend the Research Methods and Statistics in Palliative Care module .	Submission of assignments varying in length between 3,000 and 5,000 words for core and optional modules where appropriate. Where students attend the Research Methods and Statistics module and/or the Service Organisation and Policy module they would be required to attend the unseen examination.	One year
Diploma in Palliative Care	Students are required to attend all four core modules and then attend two optional modules from a choice of four available.	Unseen examinations for the Research Methods and Statistics module and the Service Organisation and Policy module and the submission of assignments varying in length between 3,000 and 5,000 words for the remaining core and optional modules where appropriate. Students attending the Diploma are not required to submit a research study project.	One year full-time, two years part-time
MSc in Palliative Care	Students are required to attend six modules (four core modules and a choice of two out of four optional modules) and conduct a research study project.	Unseen examinations for the Research Methods and Statistics module and the Service Organisation and Policy module and submitting assignments varying in length between 3,000 and 5,000 words for the remaining core and optional modules where appropriate. Students attending the MSc are required to submit a research study project.	One year full-time, two years part-time

Course Content

The MSc has been developed to raise your knowledge and understanding of clinical, social and ethical issues, their assessment and management, and to give you the skills to critically appraise new treatments and to understand and undertake research.

Two new qualifications were introduced in January 2006 to complement the highly successful MSc. The **Certificate in Palliative Care** and the **Diploma in Palliative Care** can now be offered to students wishing to study over a more flexible timescale. These two courses enable students to access core and optional modules within the MSc curriculum; achieve credits and progress towards a full MSc. The entry requirements, assessment criteria and grades are the same as for the MSc. The differentiation between levels is based on the amount of syllabus undertaken.

All three courses include teaching in the ways to manage and assess symptoms and psychosocial problems, and the evidence available to support that practice. We also offer teaching in problem solving and service development.

The syllabus for all three courses is arranged in modules, core and optional, each consisting of 10 days tuition. Each day will consist of formal lectures, seminars, practical sessions and group discussions. These modules are undertaken in one year for full-time students and in two years for part-time students. The study routes for the three courses are presented in Table 1.

Core modules:

1. Research methods and statistics in palliative care (always taken first)
2. Biology and management of symptoms in advanced disease
3. Service organisation and policy in palliative care
4. Psychosocial, cultural, ethical and spiritual issues

Optional Modules:

1. Advanced pain and symptom control
2. Service development and management
3. Advanced psychosocial and spiritual care
4. Applying epidemiology in palliative care

Research Project (MSc only):

Your project can be:

- a. a new project involving data collection
- b. an extensive systematic literature review, or
- c. analysis of existing data, already collected as part of a large study.

To date, research projects have included a wide range of exciting and challenging topics, for example: the meaning of dignity in palliative care patients; palliative care educational needs of junior doctors; a local needs assessment of chronic obstructive airways disease, and the meaning of sexuality at the end of life. Many have been published in peer-reviewed journals or presented at national and international scientific meetings.

Core Modules

1. Research Methods and Statistics in Palliative Care (always taken first)

This module aims to describe and illustrate the methods available to undertake research in palliative care, leaving you able to understand, appraise and develop sound research studies. Common research methods in palliative care are reviewed, including systematic literature reviews, quantitative methods, qualitative methods, clinical trials, epidemiological methods, survey design, economic analysis, and integration of methods in palliative care research. Statistical and measurement issues in palliative care are also covered including analysis of data, statistical interpretation, validity, reliability, appropriateness and responsiveness of methods. Other issues involved in designing and executing successful studies are also covered; these include hypotheses generation, protocol development, ethical issues, presentation of results, writing reports and papers, dissemination and implementation of results.

Learning Outcomes

1. To be able to judge whether the conclusions drawn from a research study are justified, given the methods used and results presented.
2. To be able to carry out focused, comprehensive literature searches.
3. To be able to design research studies to address issues in palliative care, including the selection of the appropriate experimental or non-experimental design.
4. To understand the differences between quantitative and qualitative research, and the advantages and disadvantages of both.

5. To be able to assess the reliability and validity of instruments used to measure, for instance, quality of life.
6. To understand and address the particular ethical and practical problems encountered in research in palliative care.
7. To be able to write a research protocol and know how to go about getting research funding; to be able to write a research paper and get it published.
8. To understand key concepts in statistics as applied to palliative medicine, to be able to describe and present data appropriately, to be able to use basic statistical tests, and to understand the presumptions underlying these tests and to be able to judge when the use of these tests is valid.

2. Biology and Management of Symptoms in Advanced Disease

This module reviews the epidemiology and pathophysiology of progressive incurable illnesses, which are relevant to specialists in palliative care. It then reviews the aetiology, mechanisms and management of common symptoms in palliative care providing you with the skills to assess and manage symptoms and appraise new therapies appropriate to their professional group.

Learning Outcomes

1. To be familiar with the epidemiology of progressive incurable diseases; the biology and staging of cancer with particular emphasis on the most common malignancies.
2. To have obtained sound knowledge in the pathophysiological effects of progressive non-malignant diseases, including the clinical effects of dysfunction and failure of the major organs.
3. To understand the association between pathological processes and prognosis.
4. To be able to assess and manage common symptoms as appropriate for the profession.
5. To recognise the contribution of different professions and disciplines in the management of symptoms.
6. To have confidence in using the basic principles outlined in this unit to evaluate any new or unfamiliar condition encountered in clinical practice.

3. Service Organisation and Policy in Palliative Care

This multi-professional module considers the historical and international perspectives of palliative care practice and policy. It will provide you with an overview of ways that services have developed and how this is affected by different cultures, local communities, resources and local and national policies. It considers approaches to needs assessment, organisation theory and local management including financial aspects, quality control and clinical audit.

Learning Outcomes

1. To have a detailed understanding of the principles and practice of palliative care and how these manifest across different professional groups, cultures and countries.
2. To understand the principles of management and organisational theory and apply these to course participants' own work settings.
3. To develop skills in order to define strategic requirements and produce policies relevant to participants' own work settings.
4. To develop skills in order to negotiate with, and influence others in the management settings including working in a management team.
5. To be able to develop quality assurance and clinical audit programmes.

4. Psychosocial, Cultural, Ethical and Spiritual Issues

This module reviews the psychosocial, ethical and spiritual issues for patients and families/carers in palliative care, providing you with the skills to explore these issues. You will consider how these psychosocial, cultural and spiritual issues affect patients and their families and what strategies can be developed to effectively provide help. Training in communication skills is given. The main ethical debates in palliative care including truth telling and communication, cultural relativism, nutrition and hydration and euthanasia are considered.

Learning Outcomes

1. Have a detailed knowledge and understanding of common psychosocial, cultural and issues in palliative care and how these impact on patients and their families.

2. Be able to communicate effectively with patients and families, in order to ascertain problems and provide information.
3. Be able to recognise the needs of different cultural groups and needs within different cultures.
4. Be able to recognise how psychosocial, spiritual and cultural issues affect other aspects of care, such as the management of symptoms.
5. Know details of effective psychosocial and communication interventions, and be able to appraise the evidence of the effectiveness of existing and new interventions.
6. Be able to debate the common ethical issues in palliative care and how these are influenced by different cultures.

Optional Modules

1. Advanced Pain and Symptom Control

This module reviews the effectiveness of different interventions to control pain and symptoms in advanced cancer. All common symptoms are covered but the module concentrates on symptoms which are difficult to control including neuropathic pain, dyspnoea, fatigue, cachexia, nausea and vomiting. Pharmacological and non-pharmacological interventions are considered.

Learning Outcomes

1. Have a detailed knowledge and understanding of the symptoms of advanced illness and the methods to manage these.
2. Be able to describe methods to manage difficult symptoms and to have developed a particular expertise in two or more symptoms.
3. Be able to appraise the evidence of effectiveness of existing and new treatments.

2. Service Development and Management

This module considers the approaches to developing and managing services using evidence based clinical practice. It reviews the evidence underpinning service development, the adaptation of such evidence to local needs, working within existing communities and cultures and detailed aspects of management including financing, strategy and marketing. Finally, the process of introducing and developing systems of quality assurance in clinical audit is considered in depth.

Learning Outcomes

1. Have a detailed understanding of the current evidence which underpins palliative care developments within different communities.
2. Be able to develop a local palliative care needs assessment and development plan within your local community.
3. Be able to develop management systems and a strategic plan for your local services.
4. Be able to initiate and maintain a quality assurance and clinical audit programme.

Optional Modules

3. Advanced Psychosocial and Spiritual Care

This module reviews the effectiveness of the psychosocial and spiritual interventions for patients and families/carers in palliative care providing you with evidence-based clinical skills and knowledge on which to base their future practice. You will review the evidence in light of their cultural and social work setting and will be expected to take a particular interest in two or more interventions.

Learning Outcomes

1. Have a detailed knowledge and understanding of the current evidence of effectiveness of different psychosocial and spiritual interventions for patients and families in palliative care.

2. Be able to describe the different ways of giving information to patients and families and the evidence of effectiveness in this area.
3. Be able to describe how the evidence of effectiveness relates to a patient's particular country and culture.
4. Be able to review the evidence of effectiveness of existing and new psychosocial interventions.
5. Have a detailed understanding of two psychosocial or spiritual interventions and their potential uses in a clinical setting.

4. Applying Epidemiology in Palliative Care

This module considers the application of epidemiological principles in the investigation of palliative care problems. The epidemiology of cancers and other common progressive diseases will be reviewed along with the use of epidemiological approaches to study patient and family needs and to evaluate services.

Learning Outcomes

1. Understand and be able to measure disease incidence and prevalence, and measures of effect.
2. Appreciate the strengths and limitations of different sources of epidemiological data on health status and health service utilization in both industrialised and less developed countries.
3. Understand the basic principles of different study designs, including cross-sectional, observational, cohort, case-control, and interventional studies, and to be able to appreciate the strengths and limitations of each one.
4. Be aware of the importance of ensuring good quality measurements of quality of life, health status, disease, and exposure status.
5. Be able to take into consideration random errors, bias and confounding when interpreting data and understand the difference between statistical association and causality.
6. Be aware of the practical value and limitations of different forms of epidemiological evidence in formulating and influencing public health policy decisions in palliative care.

Course assessment

The courses use a combination of methods on which to base the final assessment of your work (see Table 1). They consist of:

Two unseen 3-hour written examination papers for the core modules:

- Research Methods and Statistics in Palliative Care
- Service Organisation and Policy

Two written assignments of 3,000 words 6 weeks after completion of core modules:

- Biology and Management of Symptoms in Advanced Disease
- Psychosocial and Cultural, Ethical, and Spiritual

Two written assignments of 5,000 words 8 weeks after completion of optional modules:

- Advanced Pain and Symptom Control
- Service Development and Management
- Advanced Psychosocial and Spiritual Care
- Applying Epidemiology to Palliative Care

MSc only:

- 1 research study project of 15,000 words to be submitted in December at end of course.

Fees

These figures are for entry commencing January 2010 may be subject to change in the future.

	UK/EC (£)	OVERSEAS (£)
MSc (full-time)	5100	15160
MSc (part-time)	2550	7580
Certificate	1700	5050
Diploma (full-time)	3400	10100
Diploma (part-time)	1700	5120
Stand-alone modules	900	900

Entry requirements

In order to be considered for a place on the MSc, Diploma, or Certificate, you should have a degree in medicine or dentistry or at least an upper second class honours degree in life sciences, social sciences, nursing or other approved subject awarded by a United Kingdom university, or a recognised overseas university. You should also be able to demonstrate experience of working in palliative care or palliative medicine - clinical or social care, or from a research point of view, and evidence of being able to study to the standard required.

After receiving your completed application form and supporting references we will invite you to the Department for interview to discuss your experience and the courses in more detail.

Frequently Asked Questions

Does the multi-professional approach make a difference to the learning experience on the MSc, Diploma and Certificate?

It's been increasingly argued that sound palliative care requires a multi-professional team approach, recognising that all health and social care professionals and, importantly, volunteers have vital roles to play in the care of patients and their families. It is only through a team approach that it becomes possible to fully assess patients' and their families' needs, supervise the application of treatment decisions, and anticipate and support the dying and grieving process.

We strongly believe that learning alongside other health and social care professionals allows students to explore similarities and differences in roles, skills, knowledge and ideologies and to recognise the complementary skills and resources of different provisions. Students are also placed in a position whereby they can learn to acknowledge parity of esteem of their respective contributions to the care of patients and their carers. Lastly, we feel the multi-professional approach provides greater scope for open communication between all members of the group. This alleviates future hesitancy of single disciplines sharing knowledge with other professionals and non-professionals.

I want to attend on a part-time basis over two years. What is the best way of organising my time?

If you wish to attend the MSc on a part-time basis, we suggest you complete four modules in your first year (a combination of core and optional modules). With two modules to complete in your second year you will have much more time to devote to your research project. There are a number of different combinations for choosing modules and we suggest you discuss this with the Course Co-ordinator.

If you wish to attend the Diploma part-time you may wish to attend three modules per year (a combination of core and optional modules).

What support will you offer me during my studies?

Every student will be allocated a tutor at the beginning of the course. Tutors are there to help you with your options, check how you are doing, as well as offer general advice where necessary.

Are students involved in planning the course?

Each year we will ask students to elect colleagues (one full and one part-time) to be represented on the MSc, Diploma and Certificate Course Steering Group which meets several times throughout the year. Here important issues relating to the content and running of the courses are discussed and these students are actively encouraged to share their views.

Furthermore, we want to know what students feel about all our teaching. We therefore evaluate each teaching module to find out where improvements are necessary.

What library facilities are available to students attending the MSc, Diploma and Certificate?

The Guy's, King's and St. Thomas' School of Medicine library based in the Weston Education Centre has around 10,000 books and 500 current periodicals on clinical medicine and dentistry; health service matters; sciences and professions associated with medicine and dentistry. The Library maintains a collection of books, journals and other learning materials contributing to the educational programmes, clinical work and research of Guy's, King's and St. Thomas' School of Medicine. It has clinical collections to support undergraduate courses in medicine and dentistry, and postgraduate material for those undertaking further study. The collection has strengths in the areas of gastroenterology, liver disease, diabetes, obstetrics, gynaecology, paediatrics and the history of medicine but also covers topics such as palliative care, public health, health care policy, and medical audit. The Library also houses a historical collection of medical books providing a useful background to current medical research.

The library within the Education Centre at St. Christopher's Hospice houses a multi-disciplinary collection of material on all aspects of palliative care, death, dying and bereavement. This includes over 3,000 books, 40 journals, individual reprints and ephemeral material. A variety of indexing tools are also available, including Palliative Care Index (in print form) and Medline on CD-ROM.

I am very interested in the MSc, Diploma and Certificate but may need financial assistance. Can you recommend any sources of funding for this programme?

Help the Hospices have been able to provide a bursary to contribute toward tuition fees for United Kingdom students with a proven interest in palliative care. We recommend overseas students seeking financial support contact their nearest British Council office, which has local details of available grants.

I don't live near King's College and travelling to and from home each day to attend classes is out the question. Is there local accommodation near King's and St. Christopher's whilst the modules are being taught?

A number of quality Bed and Breakfast (B&B) facilities are within minutes of St. Christopher's Hospice and charge very reasonable rates. Students who do not live within a reasonable distance of King's and St. Christopher's as well as those students from overseas frequently make use of them. More permanent accommodation for overseas students can be organised through the King's College Accommodation Office (www.kcl.ac.uk/accomm).

What alumni have said about the MSc in Palliative Care

- *The modules on service development and management were very useful and covered areas which I had not covered in SpR (trainee specialist) training. I anticipate what I have learnt will be particularly helpful in a Consultant position.*
- *The course draws students from a variety of professional backgrounds and differing levels of advancement which lends greatly to the teaching and learning experience.*
- *There have been a significant number of overseas students whose cultural and professional perspectives have added value to this course.*
- *The teaching staff are one of the real strengths of the course and place it ahead of many potential rivals. Students know they will be taught by key academics and practitioners in the field of palliative care.*
- *This course ultimately helped me to gain my current post as a clinical nurse specialist in palliative care.*
- *Practical examples of things I am now confident to do include understanding the process of negotiation and strategic planning in order to assist with local service development and advise and supervise other SpRs wishing to undertake or appraise research.*
- *During the 3 months that I spent on the courses altogether in the UK, I created important relations with professionals working in the UK and other countries, and I had the occasion to visit several palliative care services thanks to these relations.*
- *I work in a university hospital in a department of oncology. As the only Dane to have an MSc in palliative care, I feel that my colleagues are respecting my knowledge, and this makes it possible for me to get main influence on the development of a palliative care unit in the department.*

Dates for MSc in Palliative Care modules

TIMETABLE FOR 2010

(PROVISIONAL)

Each module comprises two weeks of taught tuition time.

Title of Module		Date
Research Methods and Statistics in Palliative Care	<i>Core</i>	11-22 January 2010
Biology and Management of Symptoms in Advanced Disease	<i>Core</i>	1-12 March 2010
Psychosocial, Cultural, Ethical and Spiritual Issues*	<i>Core</i>	12-23 April 2010
Service Organisation and Policy in Palliative Care	<i>Core</i>	10-21 May 2010
Advanced Psychosocial Ethical and Spiritual Care*	<i>Optional</i>	14-25 June 2010
Applying Epidemiology in Palliative Care	<i>Optional</i>	14-25 June 2010
Service Development and Management	<i>Optional</i>	11-22 October 2010
Advanced Pain and Symptom Control*	<i>Optional</i>	11-22 October 2010

* held at St Christopher's Hospice

All other modules at Weston Education Centre