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Joint PhD VUB & UGent
2018-2019

INVITATION to the Public defence of

Arno MAETENS

To obtain the academic degree of

**'DOCTOR IN SOCIAL HEALTH SCIENCES''
'DOCTOR IN HEALTH SCIENCES'**

**The availability, uptake and impact of palliative home care:
a population-level study using administrative data.**

Thursday 6 June 2019

Auditorium **Piet Brouwer**, 15:30
Faculty of Medicine and Pharmacy, Laarbeeklaan 103, B-1090 Brussels

How to reach the campus Jette:
<http://www.vub.ac.be/english/infoabout/campuses>

Summary of the dissertation

The majority of patients with a chronic life-threatening illness prefer to be cared for and to die at home or in a familiar environment. As such, the development of policies and legislative and other measures to support the provision of palliative care at home has been a major priority for national and supranational legislative bodies.

However, many policy strategies often lack a sufficient evidence base. The present doctoral thesis focuses on evaluating the use, trends in use, factors that influence use, and the impact of using policy measures to support patients and informal caregivers to provide palliative care in the home or community setting in Belgium. Using full-population administrative databases containing information on all decedents in Belgium between 2010 and 2015, we provided insights into these patterns that allow formulating points of improvement, identification of focal groups for policy, but also allow evaluating the societal impact of the measures in terms of quality and costs of care.

Our research showed that several policy measures to support palliative home care exist in Belgium, and that they are effective in reducing possibly inappropriate care and total costs at the end of life when used. Moreover, people who use palliative home care support measures are more likely to die at home compared to those who do not use these measures. However, our population-level findings also reveal that these measures are overall underused, initiated late in the disease trajectory and show little trends over time, mostly so among older people and those who died with dementia.

Curriculum Vitae

Arno Maetens was born July 25th 1992. He graduated in 2014 as a Master of Science in Sociology at Ghent University. In 2015 he joined the End-of-Life Care Research Group at the VUB. He worked as a doctoral researcher on the interuniversity IWT-SBO project INTEGRATE, conducting research on evaluating the availability, use and impact of policy and community support towards informal end-of-life care, with the use of big data. He was supervised by Prof. dr. Joachim Cohen, Prof. dr. Luc Deliens, and dr. Kim Beernaert. Throughout his thesis, Arno contributed as first author to 5 publications in international peer-reviewed journals, 1 book chapter and 1 paper currently in revision. Next to his research work he was involved in the European Association for Palliative Care (EAPC) Reference Group on Public Health and Palliative Care as secretary, and collaborated as researcher in an international working group on the use of big data in end-of-life care research. He presented his research work at several national and international conferences and was awarded with the Best Article award from the Integrate research project and a Best Abstract award at the 2017 EAPC Madrid conference.