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Joint Phd VUB & SGU
2020-2021

INVITATION to the Public defense of

Nicholas JENNINGS

To obtain the academic degree of

'DOCTOR OF SOCIAL HEALTH SCIENCES' (VUB)

'DOCTOR OF BIOETHICS' (SGU)

**Palliative and End-of-life Care in a small English-speaking
Caribbean country, the case of Trinidad and Tobago**

The defense will take place on

Thursday, 8 July 2021 at 4 p.m. CET and 10 a.m. ECT

and will be organised online via Zoom meeting accessible through the following link:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/83571160397?pwd=S1hYdjlSUE84bEF1b01yU0ZjZDRLZz09>

Meeting ID: 835 7116 0397

Passcode: iRn21G

Summary of the dissertation

Trinidad and Tobago is a high-income country, and one of the English-speaking Caribbean's Small Island Developing States (SIDS); a unique group of developing countries with similar challenges to their sustainable development. Trinidad and Tobago has moved through a demographic and epidemiological transition – communicable to non-communicable disease – and has a rapidly aging population. In 2019 the population was estimated at 1.4 million of which 18.2% was 60 years and older, this demographic is anticipated to steadily increase to 24.5% by 2030 and 36.5% by 2050. Trinidad and Tobago also has one of the highest rates for morbidity and mortality from non-communicable or chronic diseases, which were estimated to have accounted for 81% of all deaths in 2016. Cardiovascular diseases 33%, cancers 15%, diabetes mellitus 15% and chronic respiratory diseases 3% were among the main causes of death. There is limited palliative care services compared to need and a lack of relevant research activity in Trinidad and Tobago and the Caribbean region.

From a public health perspective this presents several important challenges: how to guarantee favourable circumstances in which people can die (for example, free from avoidable symptoms and problems), how to guarantee access to appropriate health care and end-of-life care for these populations, how to optimise the efficiency and cost effectiveness of available health care resources, and how to develop strategies for health care by non-professional community services.

The main objectives of this dissertation are to describe the circumstances under which persons die and to describe the medical care and treatment a person received prior to their death in Trinidad and Tobago.

Curriculum Vitae

Nicholas is from the twin island republic of Trinidad and Tobago in the southern Caribbean. He has a unique combination of cross-functional skills and education in public health, programme evaluation and nursing, he is a critical care RN. Prior to his joining the End-of-Life Care Research Group at Vrije Universiteit Brussel in 2015, he was the programme co-ordinator for a regional Caribbean HIV/AIDS programme with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. As part of a team, he has also evaluated several regional projects for various international organizations. Five of Nicholas' articles on his research findings were published in different international peer-reviewed journals, some with Q1 ranking in fields of and related to palliative care or public health.