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PhD in Medical Sciences  
2016-2017

INVITATION to the Public defence of

**Yolanda W.H. PENDERS**

To obtain the academic degree of '**DOCTOR IN SOCIAL HEALTH SCIENCES**'

**Old age, dementia and end-of-life-care.**

**Fryday 28 October 2016**

Auditorium **Brouwer**, 13:30

Faculty of Medicine and Pharmacy, Laarbeeklaan 103, 1090 Brussel

How to reach the campus Jette:

<http://www.vub.ac.be/english/infoabout/campuses>

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## Summary of the dissertation

To have an accurate view of the end-of-life care received by older people is necessary to inform policy makers and practitioners on how to face the challenges posed by an ageing population. This dissertation aims to fill the knowledge gaps that currently exist regarding end-of-life care for older people, including people living and dying with dementia. Using population-based data from multiple studies and quantitative analyses, the dissertation investigates differences between care settings in end-of-life care received, out-of-pocket costs of care in the last year of life, trends in advance care planning and palliative care provision in Belgium, and challenges specific to end-of-life care for people with dementia. The dissertation highlights encouraging improvements made over time, such as greater awareness of patient preferences by general practitioners, as well as areas where improvements can still be made, such as communication with people with dementia and their next of kin and the provision of palliative care to non-cancer patients. The findings of this dissertation provide guidance for determining priorities to improve the care at the end of life of older people and people with dementia. Based on her findings, the author advises additional investment in formal care at home and support for informal carers, an increase of palliative care expertise in care homes, more and earlier communication with people with dementia and their family carers, and earlier involvement of palliative care for people with dementia and other chronic conditions.

## Curriculum Vitae

After obtaining a bachelor's degree in psychology and a master's degree in sociology at Utrecht University, the Netherlands, Yolanda Penders (1989) started her doctoral thesis on end-of-life care for older people at the Vrije Universiteit Brussels in 2013 under guidance of Prof. Dr. Lieve Van den Block and Prof. Dr. Luc Deliens. Initially working as a junior fellow in a Marie Curie Innovative Training Network, she moved on to working on an international FP7 framework project as well as national projects working with the Flemish League against Cancer and the Scientific Institute for Public Health. The results of her doctoral research were published in four peer-reviewed papers and presented at a number of national and international conferences.