



# Filling the evidence gap in palliative care: a qualitative study to identify the research agenda for thromboprophylaxis in advanced cancer

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## Background

The prevention and treatment of venous thromboembolism (VTE) in patients with life limiting disease has gained significant attention over the past decade

## Aims

To identify the scope of evidence required to influence practice within the palliative care setting.

## Methods

Audio taped semi structured interviews were conducted with hospice medical directors to identify research needed to influence thromboprophylaxis practice. Purposive sampling of units known not to have thromboprophylaxis guidelines was conducted (as identified from previous research). Interviews were transcribed and analysed for recurring themes to saturation, which occurred at twelve interviews.

## Results

Participants consisted of 12 hospice directors (7 female and 5 male) with 10 to 21 years palliative care experience (mean = 16.5 years), of which 5 to 21 years were as hospice director (mean = 11 years).

The following themes for research objectives emerged

1. Gain an understanding of the true prevalence and natural history of VTE in the hospice patient.
2. Identify the clinical and symptom burden of VTE on the background of advanced cancer symptomatology.
3. A development of outcome measures that may be meaningful to the hospice setting including quality of life and symptoms attributable to VTE.
4. Consensus of what clinical/ symptomatic outcome difference would be required to change thromboprophylaxis.

## Conclusions

The role of thromboprophylaxis in palliative care, whilst theoretically appropriate, is yet to be demonstrated in a representative population, alongside meaningful outcome measures that may influence practice. A robust research strategy to undertake this necessary research is underway.

