



16-19 March, 2021

Nijmegen, the Netherlands

**Keynote speaker:**  
**Els van Wijngaarden, PhD**

Associate professor and researcher  
Department of Care Ethics  
University for Humanistic Studies  
Utrecht, the Netherlands

Advanced European Bioethics Course

**SUFFERING, DEATH & PALLIATIVE CARE**

Ethical Issues of Medically Assisted Death and Palliative Care in a Pluralistic World

INTRODUCTION

New developments in health care strengthen the promise of a better life for everyone. This process also influences the way societies deal with the end of life and with questions regarding the meaning of suffering and death.

International debates often centre around the question whether medically hastening death is a proper means to preserve human dignity and quality of life. The other side of this issue is palliative care, defined by the WHO as the active total care of patients whose disease is not responsive to curative treatment. The suggestion that adequate palliative care helps prevent the cry for euthanasia and assisted dying, needs careful investigation.

Questions raised by these developments require thorough conceptual interpretation as well as ethical reflection. Objective of this course is to educate the participants on two main aspects: ethical questions of palliative care and medically assisted death, and philosophical, theological and medical reflections on the concepts of death and suffering. Attitudes towards death and dying, and the ethical aspects of continuing or foregoing medical treatment, and of medically assisted death receive considerable attention in this course. In addition, the dimensions of spirituality, rituals and intercultural diversity are covered.

SUBJECTS AND METHODS

The course consists of a series of lectures, discussions, parallel sessions and audiovisual materials centred around a variety of topics:

autonomy and dependence; palliative sedation and euthanasia; spirituality and palliative care; quality of life and a good death; scientific research in palliative care; moral deliberation.

The parallel sessions are devoted to in-depth small group discussions and moral deliberation on different real life cases and particular, contemporary issues in the area of end-of-life decisions. Each group will consist of ten to fifteen participants, led by a faculty member.

The course management strives for a diverse group of participants, with a large diversity in professional and cultural background.

This diversity among both faculty and participants stimulates fruitful exchange of ideas and enhances understanding of others' professional and cultural perspectives on suffering, death and palliative care. The course language is English.

Prior to the course participants will receive a syllabus with introductory readings. Since the programme schedule is strict, participants are advised to study these materials in advance.

**COURSE COORDINATOR: Gert Olthuis PhD**

Gert Olthuis is associate professor of medical ethics at the Radboudumc.

**COURSE COORDINATOR: Jelle van Gorp PhD**

Jelle van Gorp is assistant professor clinical bioethics, Radboudumc

**CONTACT INFORMATION and REGISTRATION**

Valesca Hulsman MA, course management

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[Information](#) and an [registration form](#) are also available online. Please go to [www.iqhealthcare.nl/en/](http://www.iqhealthcare.nl/en/). You will find our course under 'education'.

**Keynote speaker:** With her PhD on 'completed life in old age', Els van Wijngaarden was the first to explore experiences of relatively healthy older people with a strong wish for a self-directed death as they considered their lives no longer worth living. Her study won the prestigious [Research Prize 2017 of the Praemium Erasmianum Foundation](#).

She continues to build on this pioneering work, focussing on death and dying in old age with a specific interest for and the role of choice and control at the end-of-life.

**Tuesday afternoon 16 March 2021**

Introduction into palliative care, Kris Vissers

Keynote lecture, Els van Wijngaarden

**Wednesday 17 March 2021**

Autonomy and Dependence, Gert Olthuis

Parallel session: Autonomy and beneficence in terminal illness

Palliative sedation, Kees Besse & Maaïke van der Lee-Rijpstra

Physician assisted dying, Marianne Dees

Euthanasia in the Netherlands, Theo Boer

**Thursday 18 March 2021**

Suffering, Jelle van Gorp

Workshop: Art and Suffering

Parallel sessions: case discussion using the

Nijmegen method of moral deliberation

Scientific research in palliative care, Dick Willems (invited)

Documentary: 'Choosing to Die'

**Friday 19 March 2021**

Philosophical perspective on death, Menno de Bree

Cultural issues in death and dying, Natashe Lemos Dekker

Introduction into rituals regarding death and suffering, Joanna Wojtkowiak

**PARTICIPANTS**

Previous participants for this course came from diverse professional backgrounds, such as nursing, medicine, health care administration, ethics, philosophy, theology and pastoral care, and PhD students in these areas.

At the conclusion of the course participants will receive a certificate. Participants are reminded that they may be eligible for continuing education credits from their professional association. Accreditation from the Dutch Medical Association (KNMG) and the Dutch register for Pastoral Carers (SKGV) will be applied for. Please contact the program coordinators for further details or if you have any questions regarding this issue.

**COURSE FEES and PAYMENTS**

The course fee is € (Euro) 790. There is an early bird discount of € 100 for registration before 1 January 2021. This price includes tuition and course materials, as well as refreshments and three lunches.

Please note: the course will be organized in accordance with the [Dutch measures against COVID-19](#). Please read our terms and conditions before registering for the course.

- **Kris Vissers MD, PhD**, professor in pain and palliative care, Radboudumc
- **Kees Besse PhD, MD**, anesthesiologist, Radboudumc
- **Marianne Dees PhD**, general physician, post-doctoral researcher, Radboudumc
- **Theo Boer PhD**, professor of medical ethics, Protestant Theological University Groningen
- **Jelle van Gorp PhD**, assistant professor clinical bioethics, Radboudumc
- **Maaïke van der Lee-Rijpstra MD**, PhD candidate dept. of Anesthesiology, Radboudumc
- **Natashe Lemos Dekker PhD**, Lecturer at Institute of Cultural Anthropology and Development Society, Leiden University
- **Menno de Bree PhD**, assistant professor philosophy, University Medical Centre Groningen
- **Dick Willems MD, PhD (invited)**, professor of medical humanities, University Medical Centre Amsterdam
- **Joanna Wojtkowiak PhD**, assistant professor Ethics of Care and Spiritual Counseling Sciences, University of Humanistic Studies
- **Gert Olthuis PhD**, associate professor medical ethics, Radboudumc