Systematic Review of Foci, Designs and Methods of Palliative Care Research Conducted in Sweden between 2007 and 2012

Öhlén J.1,2, Henoch I.1,2, Carlander I.1,3, Holm M.1,4, James I.5, Kenne Sarenmalm E.1,6, Lundh-Hagelin C.3,7,8, Lind S.1,4, Sandgren A.9,10

1Ersta Sköndal University College and Ersta Hospital, Palliative Research Centre, Stockholm, Sweden, 2Sahlgrenska Academy, University of Gothenburg, Institute of Health Care Sciences, and University of Gothenburg Centre for Person-Centred Care, Gothenburg, Sweden, 3Karolinska Institutet, Department of Learning, Informatics, Management and Ethics, Stockholm, Sweden, 4Karolinska Institutet, Department of Neurobiology, Health Care Sciences and Society, Stockholm, Sweden, 5Örebro University, Department of Neurobiology, Health Care Sciences and Society, Örebro, Sweden, 6Skaraborg Hospital, Research and Development Centre, Skövde, Sweden, 7Sophiahemmet University, Stockholm, Sweden, 8Stockholms Sjukhem Fondation, Research and Development Unit in Palliative Care, Stockholm, Sweden, 9Jönköping University, School of Health Sciences, Jönköping, Sweden, 10Linnæus University, Centre for Collaborative Palliative Care and Caring Sciences, Kalmar/Växjö, Sweden

Presenting author email address: joakim.ohlen@esh.se

Background: In order to guide further development of palliative care research, national reviews regarding characteristics of national PC research is suggested. In Sweden, a previous review of national palliative care from the 1970s to 2006 provided a useful source for comparison with research conducted during the subsequent six years.

Aim: To systematically examine palliative care research from Sweden between 2007 and 2012, with special attention to research foci, designs and methods.

Methods: A systematic review was undertaken. The databases Academic Search Elite, Age Line, Ahmed, Cinahl, PsychInfo, Pub Med, Scopus, Soc abstracts, Web of Science and Libris were reviewed for Swedish palliative care research studies published from 2007 to 2012, applying the same search criteria as used in the previous review.

Results: A total of 263 papers met the inclusion criteria, indicating an increased volume of research compared to the 133 articles identified in the previous review. Common study foci were symptom assessment and management, experiences of illness, and care planning. Targeting non-cancer specific populations and utilisation of population-based register studies were identified as new features. There was continued domination of cross-sectional, qualitative and mono-disciplinary studies, not including ethnic minority groups, non-verbally communicable people, or children under 18 years of age.

Conclusion: Palliative care research has increased in Sweden, from 2007 to 2012 compared to during the 1970s to 2006, and there is an increased trend for research of non-cancer specific populations. A domination of qualitative approaches and small, cross-sectional studies with few interventions is still characteristic. Still more strategies are needed to expand the knowledge development of palliative care to respond to demographical, epidemiological, therapeutic and health care structure changes.