Title: Palliative care for patients with COPD in primary health care sector - An integrative review

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Body: Introduction: Modern organization of health care services lead to more specialized tasks in the primary sector. The literature suggests that patients with COPD are underserviced in the primary sector and receive less palliative care than patients with other diseases with comparable symptoms and prognoses. Aim: To identify, integrate and interpret the existing body of knowledge on the role and function of the health care professional in their work with palliative COPD patient care in primary sector. Methods: An integrative review of existing literature was conducted. The systematic review included: problem identification, literature search, data evaluation, analysis, synthesis, and presentation of the results. 332 original papers addressed the health care professionals’ experience of palliative approaches to patients with COPD. After detailed review of the abstracts 19 papers were selected for in depth quality assessment and analysis. Results: Professionals in primary care experience several barriers to palliative approaches, including vague definition of palliative care, unpredictability of the illness, uncertainty regarding their professional role, lack of knowledge and access to advice from COPD specialists, fear of patients’ reaction and limited time to talk with patients. Conclusions: A strong association between palliative care and death may be an obstacle for the adoption of a palliative approach to care. Death taboo, lack of knowledge and inadequate communication skills may affect the role and function of the health professional, as these barriers affect the ability to identify, initiate and evaluate palliative needs and interventions.