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Study explores docs' roles in end-of-life hospitalizations

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(HealthDay)—Family physicians have several distinct roles in preventing and guiding hospitalization at the end of life, according to a study published in the September/October issue of the *Annals of Family Medicine*.

Thijs Reyniers, from Vrije Universiteit Brussel in Belgium, and colleagues explored family physicians' perceptions regarding their roles and the difficulties they experience relating to hospital admissions at the end of life. Discussions from five focus groups that were held with 39 family physicians in Belgium were transcribed verbatim and analyzed.

The researchers identified five key roles for family physicians in preventing and guiding end-of-life hospital admissions. These roles included acting as a care planner who anticipates future scenarios and as an initiator of decisions in acute situations, most often in an advisory

capacity. In addition, family physicians acted as providers of end-of-life care, in which competency and attitude were important, and as providers of support, particularly with respect to availability during acute situations. Finally, their roles included that of decision maker, taking overall responsibly.

"Enhancing the family physician's role as a gatekeeper to hospital services, offering the physicians more end-of-life care training, and developing or expanding initiatives to support them could contribute to a lower proportion of hospital admissions at the end of life," the authors write.

More information: Abstract
Full Text

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