

# POPLHLTH 746

## Ethics, Culture and Societal Approaches to Death

15 Points  
Semester 2, 2011

### Course Prescription

Approaches to death by Maori and other cultures. Resource and legal issues in the New Zealand context. Ethical issues: euthanasia versus palliative care, privacy, living wills and the end of life medical decision-making, particularly treatment abatement. Duties after death, the nature of teamwork, the multidisciplinary nature of palliative care, the role of volunteers, emotional care for palliative care providers, and home versus residential care.

### Goals of the Course

Death, it is said, is the only 100% certainty in our lives. Yet it is an event for which we are often ill prepared – both personally and professionally. This postgraduate course explores the attitudes and beliefs related to dying which are shaped by the broader social, economic, technological and political context in which we live. A knowledge and understanding of the unique Aotearoa/New Zealand context guides clinicians in their relationships with patients and families and in their decision-making processes. It also gives insight and provides a basis for the development of inter and intra agency skills that are fundamental to a form of care that is often dependant on the resources and skills of many individuals and organisations.

- To develop an understanding of the social, political, cultural, spiritual and technological context of dying in Aotearoa/New Zealand
- To develop an advanced understanding of the nature of and the ethical theories that underpins ethical decision-making at the end of life;
- To consider the impact of cultural theories on professional care;
- To consider the ways in which health care organisations and professionals have responded to the need to deliver appropriate care to people who are dying.

### Learning Outcomes

At the completion of the course, the student will have the knowledge to:

- Critically evaluate the effectiveness of past and present systems of health care organisation involved in the care of the dying in Aotearoa/New Zealand;
- Develop skills in retrieving information, which enables an understanding of the specific needs and rituals of people from diverse cultures, thus enhancing a flexible approach to care delivery;
- Demonstrate an understanding of the concepts of justice, non-maleficence and beneficence as they relate to medical decision-making at the end of life;
- Demonstrate the ability to use an ethical framework for decision-making in palliative care practice;
- Demonstrate knowledge of appropriate statutes and legal responsibilities related to palliative care;
- Demonstrate understanding of common patient and caregiver issues and the need for user involvement and feedback in palliative care;
- Be familiar with key policies which impact on palliative care in New Zealand;
- Describe emerging models of palliative care service delivery;
- Discuss contemporary issues in palliative care

### Content Outline

Course components include

- The history of caring for patients with life-threatening illness and dying in New Zealand;
- Maori and death;
- Exploring concepts of culture and society;
- Introduction to ethical principles as they apply to end-of-life illness;
- Social theories relating to palliative care



THE UNIVERSITY  
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FACULTY OF MEDICAL  
AND HEALTH SCIENCES

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## Learning and Teaching

This course is delivered in distance mode and includes one 2-day seminar in Auckland. Course details and information including access to digitised readings and assessments are on-line and will be made accessible through Cecil at the beginning of the semester.

Contact with Senior Lecturers can be made by phone or electronic mail.

## Teaching Staff

Honorary Teaching Fellow: Jo Hathaway  
Academic Co-ordinator and Lecturer: Yvonne Bray, Email: [y.bray@auckland.ac.nz](mailto:y.bray@auckland.ac.nz)

## Programme Administrator

Upendra Wickramarachchi, Phone: (09) 3737599 ext 83058. Email: [u.wicks@auckland.ac.nz](mailto:u.wicks@auckland.ac.nz)

## Campus Teaching Dates in 2011

This course has one 2-day seminar that will be scheduled for a Thursday and Friday during the second semester.

The School of Population Health postgraduate timetable with Campus dates is available on the website:  
[www.health.auckland.ac.nz/population-health/postgrad](http://www.health.auckland.ac.nz/population-health/postgrad)

## Learning Resources

The following resources form part of the recommended list of resources and access to these resources is an advantage.

Hanks, G., Doyle, D., Calman, C. and Cherny, N. (eds) (2003) Oxford Textbook of Palliative Medicine 3rd edition. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

A list of websites and digitised readings is provided with the course material.

## Assessment

This course is assessed in three ways. Assessment 1 is focussed on Palliative Care Ethics which challenges decision-making in practice (2500 words and 50% of the total assessment mark). Assessment 2 is in two parts, a literature search, (10% of the total assessment mark), and an essay which is focussed on Health Policy and the organisation of Palliative Care (2500 words and 40% of the total assessment mark). As current palliative care practice is an advantage for this theoretical course, negotiated options (with the lecturers) based on the same topics are possible for students not in current practice. Peer reviewed discussions are also part of the assessments in this paper and account for 20 % (10% each) of the final total mark.

'Turn-it-in' is a recommended tool for students to screen assignments for plagiarism. Assignments are submitted as electronic attachments.

## Programme and Course Advice

This course is multidisciplinary in approach and suitable for students eligible for postgraduate study. Health professionals who have fulfilled the admission requirements for postgraduate study are able to enrol in this course. Doctors enrolling in the Medical Science schedule are required to have a current registration with the Medical Council of New Zealand or alternatively can enrol in the Health Science schedule. Postgraduate nursing students who wish to enrol in a Postgraduate Diploma in Health Science are advised to contact the School of Nursing for guidance on a recommended pathway and core courses that need to be completed.

Other courses that may be of interest are POPLPRAC 720, POPLPRAC 722, POPLPRAC 723, POPLPRAC 721 POPLPRAC 724 and POPLPRAC 701 for health professionals.