

## ICELAND



**Population:** 296,737

### Current Directory:

Printed version

Online version

None identified x

### Key Contact/National Association

#### Key contact:

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## Palliative Care Services

NK = not known

### Number of Palliative Care Services

	Inpatient Palliative Care Units	Hospices	Consultant Teams in Hospitals	Home Care Teams	Day Centres	Total
Adult/Children	2	0	1	3	0	6
Paediatric only	0	0	0	0	0	0
				Inpatient Palliative Care Units/ hospices	Chronic Hospitals /Nursing Homes	Total
Number of beds allocated to adult palliative care inpatients				17	0	17
				Adults	Children	Total
Number of Bereavement Support Teams				2	0	2

### Comments/Sources

- Both inpatient palliative care units are at the University hospital, one general and the other geriatric.
- A four-bed hospice unit is under development at the north side (Akureyri) of the country.
- There is one palliative care hospital team at the University Hospital.
- There are three home care teams (two in Reykjavík and one at Akureyri).
- A day centre is expected to open in 2006 at the palliative care unit in Kópavogur.
- Few children die of cancer or other chronic disorders (less than 10 a year). They are treated at the University Hospital by the children's oncological team. Most of these



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children die at the hospital but a few clinical nurse specialists or a physician will visit the children at home if needed. In cases where the parents want the child to die at home, one of the two palliative home care teams in Reykjavík offers support with symptom control and a 24 hour nursing service.

- Individual in-patient units at the University Hospital have follow-up programmes of bereavement support, and bereavement support groups are run by volunteers in different parts of the country.
- Six units at the University Hospital have their own bereavement support systems. Cancer patients have the most extensive bereavement support (for example, the program at the palliative care unit in Kópavogur).

[EAPC Palliative Care Facts in Europe Questionnaire 2005]

### Adult Palliative Care Population

95%	of patients receiving palliative care have a cancer diagnosis
5%	of patients receiving palliative care have other incurable conditions
	<b>Cancer</b>
	<b>(n)</b>
Number of patients who die at home	NK 40
Number of patients who die in a general hospital	NK 130
Number of patients who die in other healthcare institutions	NK 0

#### Comments/Sources

- Percentage of patients with cancer/non-cancer diagnoses receiving palliative care are an estimate only.

[Annual reports (2004) from the palliative care units and teams]

[EAPC Palliative Care Facts in Europe Questionnaire 2005]

### Palliative Care Workforce Capacity

	Full-time	Part-time	Total
Physicians	1	5	6
Nurses	27	15	42
Social Workers	0	2	2
Psychologists	0	0	0
Physiotherapists	0	1	1
Occupational Therapists	0	0	0
Spiritual/Faith leaders	NK	NK	4
Volunteers	0	0	0

#### Comments/Sources

- The full time physician is an oncologist. Of those who work part time, four are geriatricians, the fifth is an oncologist.
- Full-time nurses are those nurses working in palliative care for at least 80% of their time. Both in-patients units have auxiliary nurses, 10 working full time and 5 part time. Only nurses work in the hospital care team and the home care team.
- There are two part-time social workers in palliative care; one at the geriatric unit and the other at the department of oncology.
- There are no psychologists working in palliative care, although the palliative care unit in Kópavogur offers the services of psychologists working in cancer care.
- One physiotherapist works for 50% of their time at the palliative care unit in Kópavogur. The geriatric palliative care unit and the home care teams also have access to a physiotherapist.

[EAPC Palliative Care Facts in Europe Questionnaire 2005]

### Funding of palliative care services

Total number of palliative care services funded by the government	4
Total number of palliative care services funded privately or by NGO's	0



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### Comments/Sources

- **One home care team is supported by a combination of private and public funds (the Icelandic Cancer Society and the State Security System).**

[EAPC Palliative Care Facts in Europe Questionnaire 2005]

### Perceived use of main opioids in palliative care

Order of frequency	Opioid	Estimated cost per month (€)
First opioid	Contalgin (morphine sulphate)	10 mg x 2; 60 tabs/month = 1.610 ISK (100 tabs = 2.680)
Second opioid	Durogesic	25 microg every 3 <sup>rd</sup> day; = 10.670 ISK
Third opioid	Morphine chloride	5 mg x 6/24 hs: 900 mg/month = 19.286 ISK

### Comments/Sources

[EAPC Palliative Care Facts in Europe Questionnaire 2005]

### Key issues and challenges

- Financial restrictions in the health care economy.
- Limited interest in palliative care on the part of the Department of Health.
- Limited knowledge of the possibilities within palliative care (other than taking care of the dying person).

[EAPC Palliative Care Euro-Barometer 2005]

### Palliative care accreditation

- “Palliative Medicine is not accepted as a medical entity by the Icelandic Medical Association. Two doctors have graduated from the Nordic specialist course in Palliative Medicine but neither of them is working within palliative care at the moment. One clinical nursing specialist in palliative care is working at the University Hospital, the only one in the country. She has a Master’s Degree in palliative care from Canada. There is no formal education in palliative medicine/care in Iceland. However, the Nordic specialist course in palliative medicine and a newly distributed Nordic Core Curriculum in palliative care for medicine, nursing, psychosocial and spiritual professions will give further possibilities for establishment of formal education in palliative care in Iceland.”

[EAPC Palliative Care Facts in Europe Questionnaire 2005]

### Palliative care milestones

- *1987:* The first palliative home care team is started in Reykjavík by the Icelandic Cancer Society.
- *1988:* The first oncological inpatient ward is opened.
- *1992:* Two palliative home care teams are started, both nurse operated, one in Reykjavík and the other at Akureyi.
- *1997:* A palliative care consulting team is started at the University Hospital in Reykjavík, seeing around 300 patients a year.
- *1999:* A palliative care unit is established at the University Hospital with eight beds.



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- 2001: A geriatric palliative care unit is established, with nine beds for cancer patients aged 67 years or older, and served by two geriatricians (both working part time).
- 2001: The Department of Health appoints a working group on priorities within health care and publishes its minutes stating that palliative care comes second only to acute care.
- 2003-2004: Assessment of patients in palliative care services using the minimum data set for palliative care instrument (MDS-PC) is conducted in Reykjavík.

[EAPC Palliative Care Euro-Barometer 2005]

### Health policy

- Initially, palliative care in Iceland was based on the work of pioneers and enthusiastic individuals, but during the last five years palliative care has become established within the official health care system and considered to be an accepted part of the health care service.
- Palliative care in Iceland is well established, especially in Reykjavík and the surroundings area where 60% of the population live (and also around Akureyri).
- Although palliative care has developed within the oncological and geriatric sectors, interest is increasing within the neurological, lung and heart divisions. A palliative care clinic is on the agenda at the University Hospital and will include an inpatient unit, a day care centre, a home care team, a hospital consultation team and a bereavement service.
- The Palliative Care Unit, Landspítali University Hospital, did not mark the publication of the Council of Europe (2003) report on palliative care (Recommendation 24 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the organisation of palliative care).
- The Palliative Care Unit, Landspítali University Hospital, has not participated in any way in the Council of Europe discussions about euthanasia (the Marty Report).
- At the current time, there are no initiatives in Iceland that seek the legalisation of euthanasia or assisted suicide. The discussion on euthanasia has never received any interest in Iceland, and both lay people and health care professionals seem to have little interest in the topic. A few articles have appeared in newspapers but gained little attention.

[EAPC Palliative Care Euro-Barometer 2005]

### References

- There are no palliative care references for Iceland.

Information correct as at: 7<sup>th</sup> August 2006.





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