Researching end of life care from a social science perspective: past, present and future contributions

Profiles of organisers

**Erica Borgstrom** is a lecturer in medical anthropology and end-of-life care at the Open University. Her research focuses ‘core concepts’ within end-of-life care, using an anthropological and ethnographic lens to examine the values and practices such concepts uphold and how these influence people’s experiences of care and living near the end of life. Her [doctoral work](#) examined the concept of choice in English end-of-life care policy, healthcare practice, and everyday experiences with life-limiting conditions. She is currently working on projects about conceptualising interventions and not intervening as care as well as the professional and organisational overlaps of geriatric and palliative care. Erica has [published](#) on a variety of issues relating to end-of-life care and death studies, and has recently co-edited a special issue of *Mortality* about researching death, dying and bereavement.

**Sarah Hoare** is an early-career medical sociologist. She recently completed her PhD at the University of Cambridge, exploring hospital admissions at the end of life. In this mixed methods study, she assessed the relevance of the claim that most patients want to die at home, and conducted case studies of patients who had died shortly after admission to hospital. Using social practice theory, she established the complicated interplay of care involved in keeping patients out of hospital, and demonstrated that dichotomies of ‘appropriate’ and ‘inappropriate’ are unhelpful for understanding end-of-life admissions. She is currently working within a Marie Curie-funded collaboration between the Cambridge Engineering Design Centre and Sheffield Hallam University that seeks to create a framework to enable local redesign of community-based palliative care.

Natashe Lemos Dekker is a PhD candidate in medical anthropology at the University of Amsterdam and recently started as a postdoc researcher at the Leiden University Medical Centre. Through ethnographic fieldwork in nursing homes in the Netherlands, her PhD research addresses the social processes and the management of death and dying with dementia. She scrutinizes the notion of social death and assesses the politics of death and dying by questioning normative conditions for the production of lives worth living. Her postdoc revolves around the implementation of palliative care in nursing homes through a critical evaluation of palliative care tools for observing and marking the end of life.

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