

Expanding Palliative Care Access Through General Practitioners in the Czech Republic

The "Palliative Practitioners" Program

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Figure 1 The places of practice of general practitioners who participated in the first session of the course and are now acting as so-called ambassadors.



Figure 2 The places of practice of general practitioners from the second session of the course, again with an emphasis on locations with limited access to palliative care.

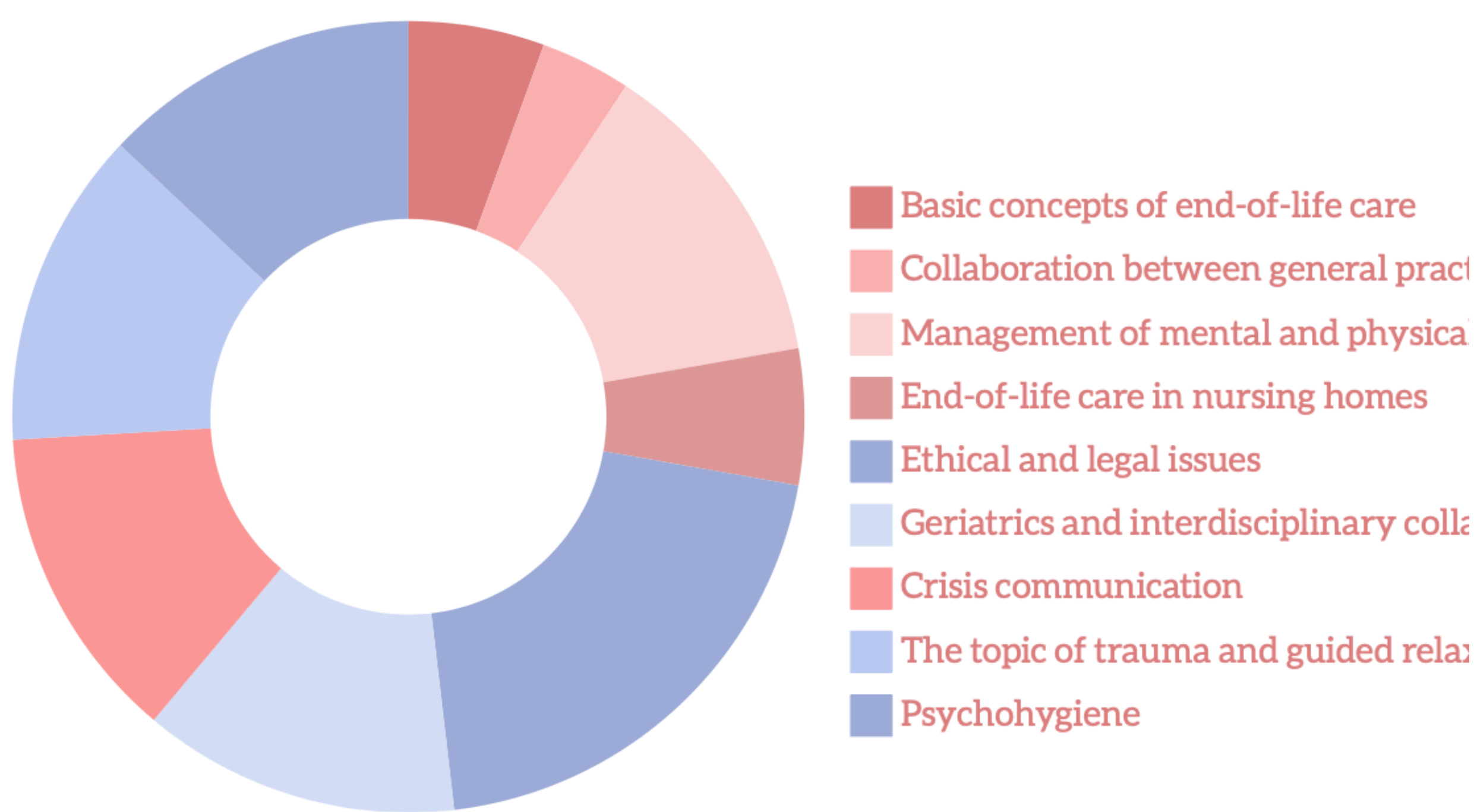


Figure 3 The representation of individual topics of the 9-day course in hours.

Background

In the Czech Republic, approximately **5,500 general practitioners (GPs)** care for around 8 million people. The senior population, particularly those aged 85+, is expected to **double** by 2040, increasing the prevalence of chronic diseases. Specialized end-of-life care is **unevenly distributed** and not easily accessible to all patients. General practitioners (GPs) are **crucial** in providing **accessible** and **personalized** general end-of-life care.

Aim

This program aims to **expand** general palliative care accessibility by creating a **network** of general practitioners trained in essential end-of-life care skills. The goal is to ensure **consistent, high-quality** palliative care nationwide, with focus on addressing **regional inequalities**.

Methods

In 2023, a **survey** was conducted among approximately **340 GPs** to assess their **needs** regarding end-of-life care. The feedback from this survey informed the design of the **training course**. The program includes a **9-day training course** divided into three blocks of three days, totaling **72 hours of education**. The course addresses life care concepts, care planning, communication of serious news, collaboration with palliative teams, symptom management, legal and ethical issues, and psychohygiene, among other topics. In 2024, **14 GPs "regional ambassadors"** completed the training

Results

The first cohort of **14 ambassadors**, who represent different regions of the Czech Republic (dominantly in locations with **poorer access** to specialized end-of-life care), is actively engaged in spreading awareness and educating GPs in their respective areas. They contribute to the creation of **new palliative care guidelines** for general practice, which will be published in the coming year. In 2025, another group of **14 GPs** will undergo the second cycle of training, continuing to strengthen the **network**. Ambassadors and participants of the 2025 course now meet regularly once a month online, where they **share** case studies from their practice and can discuss the issues with a guest expert invited for each specific topic (e.g., law, ethics, etc.).

Summary

The **Palliative Practitioners Program** aims to build a sustainable and functional **network** of palliative care GPs. By updating their knowledge and sharing case studies, this network will ensure that **quality end-of life care** remains **accessible** to all patients across the Czech Republic. The long-term goal is to create a system where GPs are well-equipped to provide **comprehensive, compassionate** care in the final stages of life.

The program is led by experts from the Czech Society for Palliative Care and financially supported by the Abakus Foundation.