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'UNPACKING THE HOME' – A SOCIAL SCIENCE APPROACH TO RESEARCHING DYING AT HOME

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Introduction Current UK end of life care policy places high priority on patients having choice about their place of care, and promotes dying at home, based on an assumption that there are family carers able and willing to provide care for the dying person.

Aims and Methods This paper will discuss how perspectives from a range of social sciences were brought together to investigate the experiences of people caring for a dying family member at home. Researchers with expertise in social gerontology, health geography, health psychology, primary care, medical sociology, nursing and palliative care collaborated to develop a two-year study. Their combined perspectives are being used to investigate how family carers experience 'dying at home'. As user involvement is also important in social science research, individuals with experience of caring for a dying family member at home have helped to develop the research, and will continue to be involved throughout the study.

Results A proposal was successfully funded through peer-reviewed competition. The qualitative design uses in-depth interviews with up to 50 bereaved carers in the north and south of England recruited via GP practices. Pilot interviews in both areas have been conducted. Using the principles of grounded theory, a cross-sectional thematic analysis of all data will be undertaken, followed by a narrative analysis of a subset of 30 transcripts.

Conclusion A social science approach can offer perspectives on cultural beliefs and practices that would not be captured using a single disciplinary approach.