

# Factors influencing the occupational situation of people with terminally-ill relatives in Germany – Results of the EPACS-Study

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## Background

- Knowledge about the occupational situation of persons with terminally-ill relatives may be very useful for the planning of public health strategies to facilitate the balancing act between informal care and work.
- There are no current data in Germany about the occupational situation of people with terminally-ill relatives.
- The analysis presented here is part of the so-called EPACS study (Research Accompanying the Establishment of Hospice and Palliative Care Services in Rhineland-Palatinate, Germany). The aim of this analysis was to identify factors which influence the occupational situation of people with terminally-ill relatives in Germany.

## Methods

- Cross-sectional study, carried out between September 2008 and January 2009 by the University Medical Center of Mainz.
- A random sample of 5,000 addresses of deceased inhabitants was drawn from all local registry offices in Rhineland-Palatinate.
- A written survey addressed relatives of deceased people with principal residence in Rhineland-Palatinate.
- Bereaved were asked if their employer was informed about the dying relative and if their employer showed consideration with their situation. Possible answers were: „yes“, „no“, „did not concern me“, or „I did not want that/Not necessary“.
- In a multiple logistic regression analysis, we estimated influencing factors on working (=1) versus not-working (=0) in the last four weeks prior to the relatives' death.

## Results

- Participation rate of 36.0% (n = 1,378).
- Of the 898 respondents who were younger than 65 years, 36.9% worked full-time, 26.0% part-time, and 36.2% did not work at all (1.0% Missing).

Table 1: Influencing factors on the occupational situation of people with terminally-ill relatives in Germany

Variable	Multivariable (n=711)		
	aOR*	p-value	95%-CI**
<b>Age (Respondent)</b>	0.92	<.001	0.90-0.94
<b>Sex (Respondent)</b>			
Male	2.00	<.001	1.37-2.90
Female (Ref.-Cat.)			
<b>Education (Respondent)</b>			
Good	2.12	<.001	1.41-3.18
Average	1.59	0.030	1.05-2.43
Bad (Ref.-Cat.)			
<b>Living in one common household</b>			
Yes	0.53	<.001	0.38-0.75
No (Ref.-Cat.)			
<b>Nursing Level</b>			
Level I	0.67	0.125	0.40-1.12
Level II	0.55	0.007	0.35-0.85
Level III	0.43	0.001	0.26-0.71
None (Ref.-Cat.)			

\* aOR: adjusted Odds Ratio  
\*\* 95%-CI: 95%-Confidence Interval  
- Relationship between respondent and decedent, disease of decedent, place of death, and being disabled were included in the model but eliminated by the stepwise procedure"

- The probability to work full-/half-time in the last four weeks prior to the relatives' death was significantly higher when people were male (aOR:2.00;95%-CI:1.37-2.90), and highly (aOR:2.12;95%-CI:1.41-3.18) or averagely (aOR:1.59;95%-CI:1.05-2.43) educated.
- On the contrary, the probability was significantly lower with increasing age (aOR:0.92;95%-CI: 0.90-0.94), when living together with the dying person in one common household (aOR: 0.53;95%-CI:0.38-0.75), and when having a level of care II (aOR:0.55;95%-CI:0.35-0.85), or level of care III (aOR:0.43;95%-CI:0.26-0.71).

## Conclusions

- Flexible work schedules and other workplace prevention measures to relieve the relatives are urgently needed.
- Available ambulant palliative care teams should be increased to further reduce the burden of care born by the relatives, and to facilitate the performing of a professional activity.