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A narrative review of the literature on equity as it pertains to end of life care

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Introduction: A number of studies and publications over the past decade have described powerfully the relative inequities in access to palliative, specialist palliative and hospice care for disenfranchised individuals and groups. Recent public health analyses have offered useful insights but despite a range of interventions the multifactorial barriers have been worryingly impervious to change.

Aim: A narrative review of the literature on equity as it pertains to end of life care will demonstrate cross cutting themes that impact individuals and groups who do not routinely access palliative care and a four level analysis of access will be undertaken with suggestions for addressing the operational barriers of each level.

Method: A wide ranging narrative review of the literature on equity as it relates to end of life care has been undertaken the conclusions of which inform practice in addressing the barriers to access of palliative care for individuals and groups across a spectrum of potential users.

Conclusions: The barriers to access for individuals and groups can be characterised into distinct groups/themes which are useful for devising both proactive and reactive interventions to address the same ensuring all those who need palliative care are able to receive it in a way which affirms their personhood and in the place(s) of their choosing, irrespective of which condition occasions their dying.

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