

# Place of death for people with life-limiting illnesses (2005-2030): past trends and projections in Malaysia

Wong Wen Jun<sup>1</sup>, Yang Su Lan<sup>1</sup>, Subramaniam Kalianan Ramani<sup>1</sup>, Ganapathy Shubash Shander<sup>2</sup>, Teoh Cindy Cy Oun<sup>3</sup>, Hwong Wen Yea<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Centre for Clinical Epidemiology, Institute for Clinical Research, <sup>2</sup>Institute for Public Health, <sup>3</sup>Hospital Selayang

## ABSTRACT

**Introduction:** Place of death (PoD) is considered an important aspect of end-of-life care because it is related to quality of life. It also acts as a proxy indicator of whether care meets the patient's preference during end-of-life since most people prefer to die at home. This study aimed to examine the past trends and future projections of PoD of patients with life-limiting illnesses. **Methods:** We conducted an analysis of decedents aged 15 years and above who died from life-limiting illnesses from 2005-2019 using the national mortality registry. PoD was categorized as home, hospital, care home and elsewhere. Future trends in PoD until 2030 were projected using simple linear modelling. **Results:** Between 2005 and 2019, there were 1,423,942 deaths due to life-limiting illnesses with the highest cause of death being Alzheimer's disease, dementia and senility (37.0%), followed by heart disease (22.9%) and malignant neoplasm (15.4%). The percentage of home deaths declined from 59.9% to 49.2% in 2019. Contrastingly, percentages of hospital and care home deaths increased (35.1-45.2% and 0.6-1.1%). If the current trend continues, home deaths will decline further to 42.2% by 2030. This would correspond to a relative increase of 22.1% in-hospital deaths by 2030. **Conclusion:** The rising trends in hospital deaths could be the result of growing hospital palliative care services in the country. Nevertheless, this trend is heading towards a direction which is against people's preferences. Therefore, more effort to expand and strengthen community palliative care support to enable more people to die in community settings is urgently called for.