

# Communication skills training for health care professionals in palliative and end-of-life care

## What works? Where to from here?

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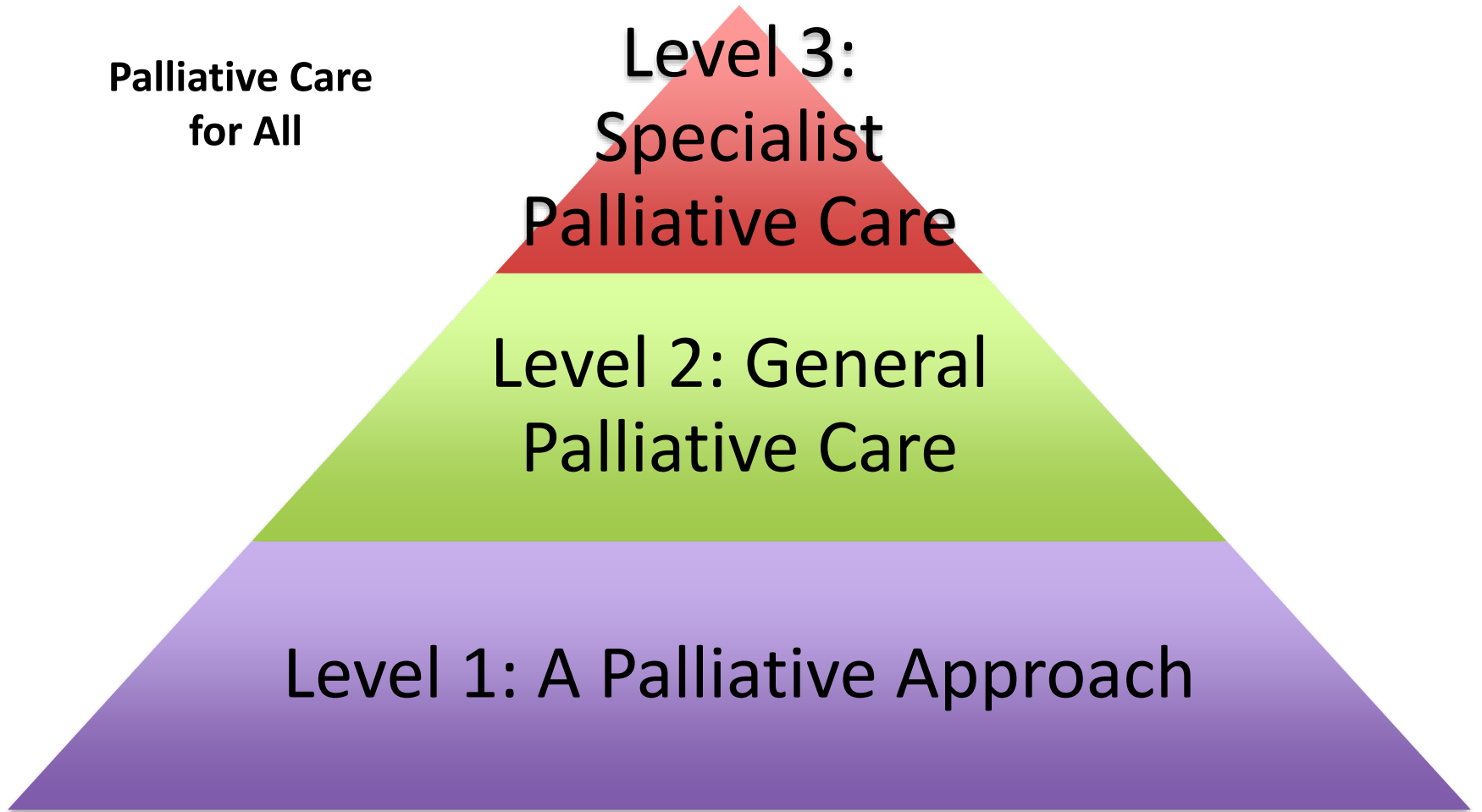
# Palliative and End of Life Care

Palliative Care  
for All

Level 3:  
Specialist  
Palliative Care

Level 2: General  
Palliative Care

Level 1: A Palliative Approach



# HIQA

‘Discussions are held with the patient on an on-going basis about his/her needs and preferences.’

**Quality Standards of  
End-of-Life Care in Hospitals 3.3**

‘The resident’s wishes and choices regarding end-of-life care are discussed’

**HIQA Standards for Residential Care Settings for  
Older People 16.2**

# Essential Competency Domains

1	Principles of Palliative Care
2	<b>Communication</b>
3	Optimising comfort and quality of life
4	Care planning and collaboration
5	Loss, grief and bereavement
6	Professional and ethical practice

# Effective Communication

Essential to the application of palliative care principles and delivery of palliative care.

Important where circumstances are ambiguous or uncertain and when strong emotions and distress arise.

# So how are doing in Ireland?

*“Maybe more communication with family as we were unaware that relative was close to death in days before she died.”*

*“One of the doctors could have been more sensitive answering questions especially when my wife was dying, more training might help.”*

**McLoughlin (2015)**

**Hearing the voice of bereaved relatives**

# So what do we know?

- Communication does not necessarily improve with experience (Fellowes et al., 2004)
- Training is not mandatory in Ireland
- An EU consensus document was published in 2009 – cancer specific (Stiefel et al.)
- The basics aren't enough in palliative care (Heaven and Maguire, 1996)

# What's an advanced curriculum?

Basic Oncology	Advanced Oncology
Breaking bad news	Clinical trials
Discussing prognosis and risk	Cancer genetics
Shared decision making	Survivorship
Responding to emotions	Treating adherence
Dealing with recurrence	Internet and unproven therapies
Transition to palliative care	Cultural beliefs
Family meetings	Working as a MDT
Discussing death and dying	Discussing infertility and sexuality



# Cochrane Review – Cancer Specific

*“various communication skills training courses appear to be effective in improving some types of health care professional communication skills related to information gathering and supportive skills” (p. 2).*

Moore et al. (2013)

*“no evidence to support a beneficial effect of communication skills training programmes on HCP 'burnout', patients' mental or physical health, and patient satisfaction,” (p. 2)*

Moore et al. (2013)

# 'Moore' questions than answers?

- The optimal length of training/course structure?
- The long-term efficacy of training?
- The role of e-learning?
- Compulsory rather than voluntary training?
- The role of consolidation courses?

# PICOCS (Mulligan et al. 2016)

<b>Population</b>	<b>Healthcare professionals</b>
<b>Intervention</b>	<b>Communication skills training and education</b>
<b>Comparator</b>	<b>Other models of training with/without a control group</b>
<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Any</b>
<b>Context</b>	<b>Palliative / end of life care</b>
<b>Studies</b>	<b>Empirical studies – English – Published Jan 12-June16 – Systematic reviews</b>

# Databases Searched (Mulligan et al. 2016)

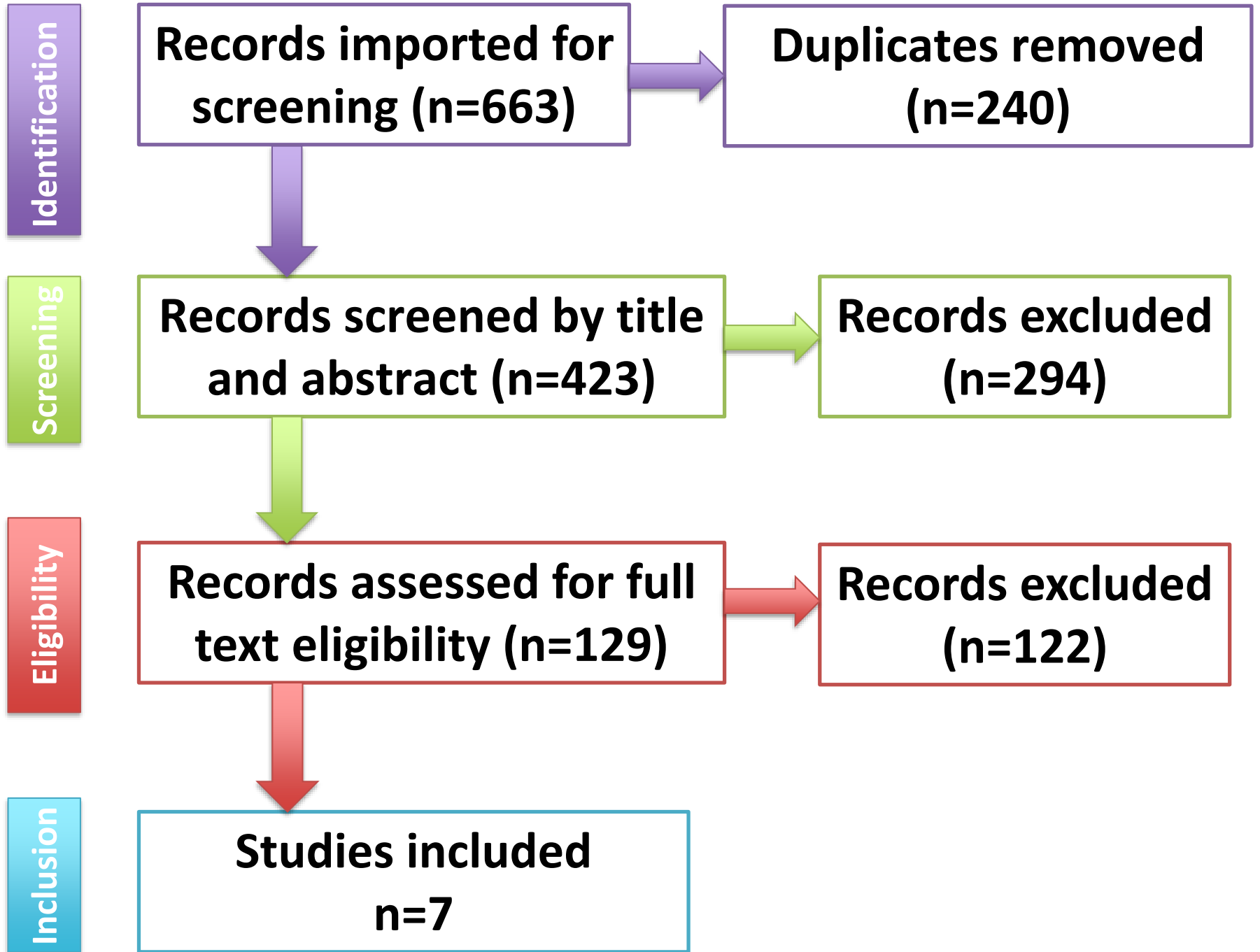
Cinahl

Academic  
Search  
Complete

Medline

Psychinfo

Socindex



Study Design	Author
Systematic Review	Lord et al., 2016
Lit review + meta analysis	Kissane et al. 2012
RCT	Canivet et al. 2014 Merckaert et al. 2015
Controlled Trial	Meystre et al. 2013 Singy et al. 2012 Slort et al. 2013







The studies are **of low to moderate quality** and therefore there is little compelling evidence to suggest that Milford Care Centre should consider any alternative models of training at this time.

This in turn presents an **opportunity for researchers** in Ireland to contribute to the development of robust longitudinal studies of advanced communication skills training programmes in this sector.

# So what now?

review

*Annals of Oncology* 21: 204–207, 2010  
doi:10.1093/annonc/mdp564  
Published online 21 December 2009

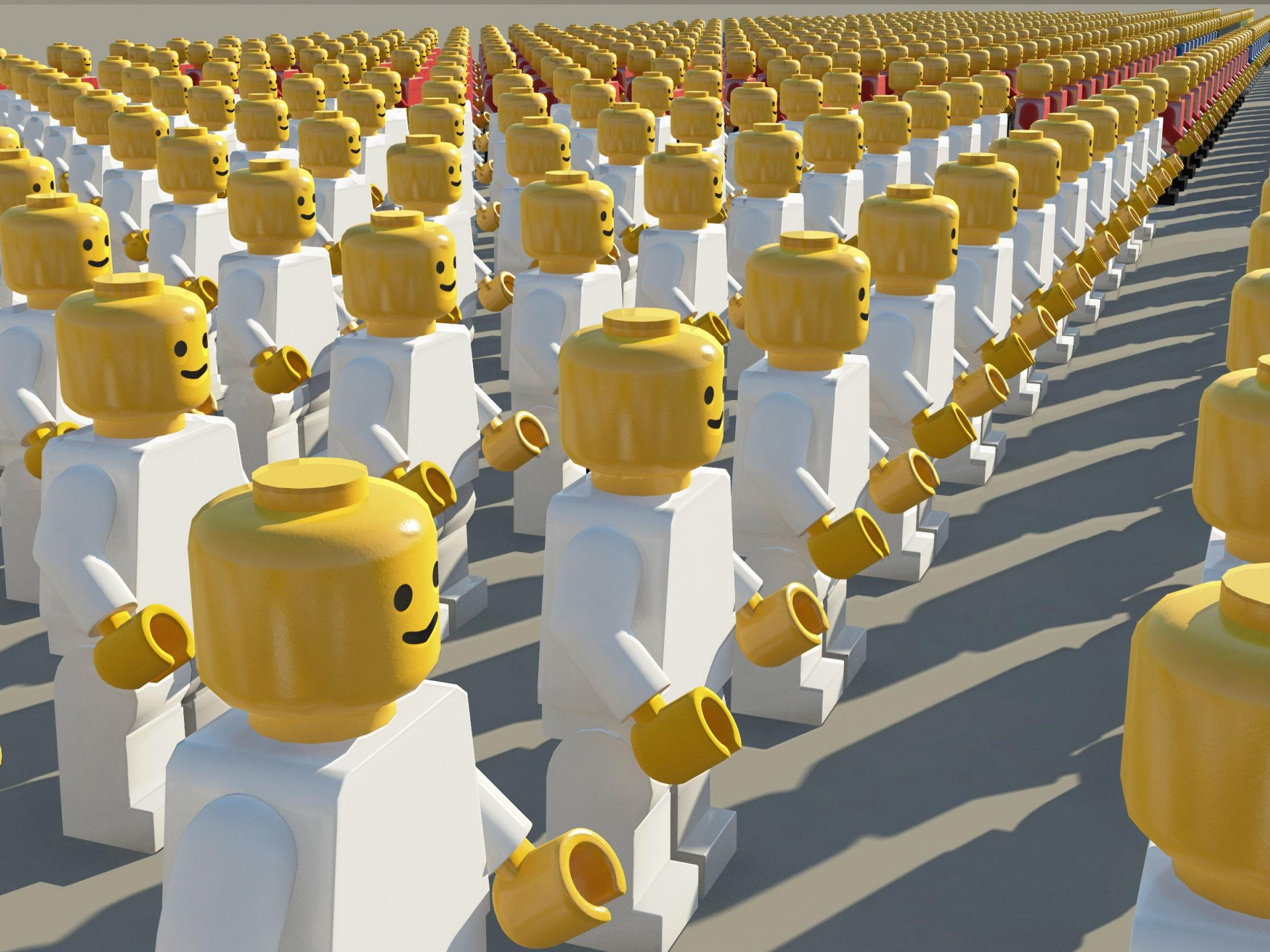
## Communication skills training in oncology: a position paper based on a consensus meeting among European experts in 2009

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Received 8 July 2009; revised 14 October 2009; accepted 9 November 2009

**Background:** Communication in cancer care has become a major topic of interest. Since there is evidence that ineffective communication affects both patients and oncology clinicians (physicians and nurses), so-called communication skills trainings (CSTs) have been developed over the last decade. While these trainings have been demonstrated to be effective, there is an important heterogeneity with regard to implementation and with regard to





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*With thanks to Christine Mulligan and Dr. Sinead McGilloway  
Mental Health and Social Research Unit, Maynooth University*



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