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Nursing Competences across Different Levels of Palliative Care Education and Provision: A Systematically Constructed Review with Narrative Synthesis

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Background: Palliative care (PC) is provided across healthcare settings and nurses play an active role in its provision. Three levels of PC provision and education have been recognized: basic (A), and specialist (B and C) levels. Nurses need competences to provide appropriate PC in all levels. Aims: To systematically assess and synthesize the evidence of empirical studies with respect to the identification of nursing competences in PC and the assessment of whether these differ across levels of PC. Methods: Systematically constructed review with narrative synthesis, following the Centre for Reviews and Dissemination (2008) and PRISMA guidelines. Data sources: CINAHL, MEDLINE, PubMed, Academic Search Premier, Scopus. Inclusion criteria: empirical studies on nursing competences in PC in different contexts, in English, Swedish, Finnish, Spanish, Portuguese or German language, with full text available. Main search terms: ‘palliative care or hospice care or end-of-life care’ and ‘competence or professional competence’ and ‘nursing’. Articles were independently screened and reviewed by two researchers. Quality appraisal was conducted. Results: 2922 articles retrieved; 16 included for analysis. The levels of PC (A, B/C) were rarely defined in these studies. Most of the studies

focused on different contexts of PC provision (e.g., hospice, home care, intensive care unit and inpatient units). A wide range of competences were identified as needed in different contexts. Conclusions: This study shows that nurses need a wide range of competences in PC depending on the setting where they develop their practice. There are barely no studies focusing on competences aligned with the different levels of PC provision and education. A better systematization of nursing competences in PC considering the different levels of PC provision is needed to enhance PC development, education and provision. This calls for more research.