

Care gaps leave cancer patients dying in agony

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Thousands of cancer patients are dying in pain every year because of disjointed care, figures suggest.

One in ten terminally-ill patients spends their final days without proper pain relief because of gaps between services, say campaigners.

Patients who said that the NHS and social services did not talk to each other were almost four times more likely to die in pain, according to Macmillan Cancer Support.

The NHS has been urged to regard palliative care as a core task after it emerged that one in ten patients will die in hospital, yet only one in ten hospitals have 24-hour end-of-life services. One in five people say that

pain is their biggest fear about dying, according to an ICM survey of 1,800 people for Macmillan. The Office for National Statistics has also found that one in ten people who died of cancer had carers who said their relative had spent their last 48 hours in pain, the equivalent to 12,000 people a year.

Lynda Thomas, Macmillan's chief executive, said: "Absolutely no one should suffer unnecessary pain in their final days. We need better coordinated, round-the-clock community care to help prevent this anguish."

Ms Thomas pointed out that the Conservatives had promised to improve care for the dying. "The government must end the variation in the quality of care people receive. Things cannot carry on the way they are."