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Perspektiven einsamer und nicht-einsamer Menschen auf Einsamkeit und soziale Einbindung

Symposium im Rahmen der Themenwoche
„Gem/Einsamkeit“ der VolkswagenStiftung

2.–4. Juli 2025 | Hannover

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Die Auseinandersetzung mit Einsamkeit ist eine zentrale gesellschaftliche Herausforderung. Das interdisziplinäre Symposium bringt führende Wissenschaftler:innen, Vertreter:innen aus Politik und Verwaltung sowie lokale Praktiker:innen und betroffene Personen zusammen. Ziel der Veranstaltung ist es, zentrale Themen der Einsamkeitsprävention und -linderung aus interdisziplinärer Perspektive zu diskutieren und innovative sozialraumorientierte Ansätze zu entwickeln.

Ein besonderer Fokus liegt auf der Überwindung von Informationsbarrieren sowie der Auseinandersetzung mit dem Gefühl der Einsamkeitsscham. Dabei werden nicht nur theoretische und praxisorientierte Perspektiven betrachtet, sondern auch Menschen mit Einsamkeitserfahrungen selbst zu Wort kommen. Dieser Dialog ist entscheidend, um die spezifischen Bedürfnisse und Perspektiven Betroffener in praxisorientierte Lösungsansätze einzubeziehen.

Das Symposium wird im Rahmen der Themenwoche „Gem/Einsamkeit“ von der VolkswagenStiftung gefördert und umfasst in einem dreitägigen Programm Keynotes, moderierte Panels und Zukunftswerkstätten.

Die Ergebnisse des Symposiums, einschließlich der Stimmen der Betroffenen, werden in einem Open-Access-Tagungsband gebündelt, der einen nachhaltigen Beitrag zur wissenschaftlichen und praktischen Diskussion leisten soll und im Herbst 2026 im Beltz Juventa Verlag veröffentlicht wird.

Vorbereitet und durchgeführt wird das Symposium von Prof. Dr. Michael Noack, Hochschule Niederrhein, zusammen mit Dr. Petra Potz und Nils Scheffler, Projekt der Wüstenrot Stiftung „Einsamkeit. Neue Anforderungen an lebendige Quartiere“.

Eine Teilnahme ist nur auf Einladung möglich.

Symposium im Rahmen der Themenwoche „Gem/Einsamkeit“ der VolkswagenStiftung 2.–4. Juli 2025 | Hannover

Tagungsort

Xplanatorium Schloss Herrenhausen
Kongresszentrum, Herrenhäuser Str. 5, 30419 Hannover
www.volkswagenstiftung.de

Anfahrt mit ÖPNV

Straßenbahn-Linien 4 und 5, Haltestelle: Herrenhäuser Gärten

Organisation und Kontakt

Alina Esch, Hochschule Niederrhein
alina.esch@stud.hn.de

Koordination des Symposiums

Prof. Dr. Michael Noack, Hochschule Niederrhein
michael.noack@hs-niederrhein.de
www.hsnr.de/sozialwesen/personen/prof-dr-michael-noack

Dr. Petra Potz, location3 - Wissenstransfer
potz@location3.de

Nils Scheffler, Urban Expert
scheffler@urbanexpert.net
www.quartier-einsamkeit.de

Programm

Mittwoch, 2. Juli 2025

09.00 – 12.00 Uhr **Start der Themenwoche im Auditorium**
Begrüßungskaffee & Kennenlernen
Vorstellung der vier Symposien

12.00 – 13.00 Uhr **Gemeinsames Mittagessen im Festsaal**

Themenfokus: Einsamkeit und Informationsbarrieren

13.00 – 13.30 Uhr **Registrierung und Begrüßung**

13.30 – 15.00 Uhr **Keynotes: Einsamkeit und Informationsbarrieren**
Impulse (10 min) mit jeweils 10 min Diskussion
Warum erreichen Informationen über einsamkeitsspezifische und einsamkeitsunspezifische Unterstützungsangebote viele sozial isolierte und/oder vereinsamte Menschen nicht?

Impulse: Einsamkeit und Informationsbarrieren...

aus Betroffenenperspektive:

Betroffene im Dialog

aus kommunaler Perspektive:

Gerhard Kalter, Stadt Mönchengladbach

aus Praxisperspektive:

Frank Jessen, IBIS-Institut, Duisburg

aus wissenschaftlicher Perspektive:

Prof. Dr. Johanna Muckenhuber, FH JOANNEUM Graz

15.00 – 15.15 Uhr **Kaffeepause**

15.15 – 16.00 Uhr **Panel: Einsamkeit und Informationsbarrieren**
Im Panel findet ein moderativ begleiteter Austausch statt zwischen Wissenschaftler:innen, Akteur:innen aus Politik, Verwaltung und Stadtentwicklung, Angehörigen helfender bzw. psychosozialer Berufe sowie Menschen, die sich einsam fühlen. Die Diskussionsergebnisse werden dokumentiert und dienen als Grundlage für die anschließende Zukunftswerkstatt.

Programm

Mittwoch, 2. Juli 2025

Themenfokus: Einsamkeit und Informationsbarrieren

Diskussionsfragen

Mit welchen Strategien zugehender und aufsuchender Arbeit können Menschen erreicht werden, die aufgrund ihrer Einsamkeit Hilfe suchen, aber nicht wissen, an welche Stellen sie sich wenden können?

Welche Akteur:innen können Brücken in die Lebenswelten vereinsamer Menschen bauen?

Welche Anlaufstellen und Orte braucht es, um das Einsamkeitsrisiko zu senken?

16.00 – 16.30 Uhr

Pause

16.30 – 18.30 Uhr

Zukunftswerkstatt

Ziel der Zukunftswerkstatt ist es, interdisziplinär und praxisorientiert zu diskutieren, wie Informationsbarrieren überwunden werden können, um Wege aus der Einsamkeit zu eröffnen.

Die Zukunftswerkstatt folgt den drei Phasen:

Kritikphase: Analyse der Informationsbarrieren, die Menschen an der Teilnahme an sozialen Angeboten hindern

Utopiephase: Entwicklung von Visionen und kreativen Ideen, um diese Barrieren zu überwinden

Realisierungsphase: Erarbeitung konkreter Handlungsschritte, die zur Umsetzung der entwickelten Ideen beitragen können. Kleingruppen werden gebildet, um praktische Lösungen zu entwickeln.

18.30 Uhr

Abendessen im Festsaal

22.00 Uhr

Ende des 1. Tages

Programm

Donnerstag, 3. Juli 2025

Themenfokus: Einsamkeit und Scham

09.00 – 09.30 Uhr

Begrüßungskaffee

09.30 – 11.00 Uhr

Keynotes: Einsamkeit und Scham

Impulse (10 min) mit jeweils 10 min Diskussion

Welche Rolle spielen Kontaktgelegenheitsstrukturen beim Aufbau sozialer Kontakte für Menschen, die sich aufgrund ihrer Einsamkeit schämen?

Impulse: Einsamkeit und Scham...

aus Betroffenenperspektive:

Betroffene im Dialog

aus kommunaler Perspektive:

Sabrina Janz, Stadt Dortmund

aus Praxisperspektive:

Stefanie Bath, Fördererverein Heerstraße Nord e. V., Berlin

aus wissenschaftlicher Perspektive:

Prof. Dr. Michael Noack, Hochschule Niederrhein

11:00 – 11.15 Uhr

Pause

11.15 – 12.00 Uhr

Panel: Einsamkeit und Scham

Im Panel findet ein moderativ begleiteter Austausch statt zwischen Wissenschaftler:innen, Akteur:innen aus Politik, Verwaltung und Stadtentwicklung, Angehörigen helfender bzw. psychosozialer Berufe sowie Menschen, die sich einsam fühlen. Die Diskussionsergebnisse werden dokumentiert und dienen als Grundlage für die anschließende Zukunftswerkstatt.

Diskussionsfragen

Welche Rolle spielen Kontaktgelegenheiten beim Aufbau sozialer Beziehungen für Menschen, die sich für ihre Einsamkeit schämen?

Programm

Donnerstag, 3. Juli 2025

Themenfokus: Einsamkeit und Scham

Wie können Menschen, die aufgrund anderer Themen psychosoziale Unterstützung erhalten, auch in Bezug auf Einsamkeit unterstützt werden, ohne sie als „einsam“ zu etikettieren?

Wie kann die Ausstattung eines Quartiers dazu beitragen, niederschwellige Gelegenheiten zum zwanglosen Gespräch, zur sozialen Interaktion und Teilhabe zu schaffen?

12.00 – 13.00 Uhr

Gemeinsames Mittagessen im Festsaal

13.00 – 15.00 Uhr

Zukunftswerkstatt

Die Zukunftswerkstatt soll die Frage behandeln: Wie können Wege aus der Einsamkeit unter Berücksichtigung von Einsamkeitsscham gestaltet werden?

Die Zukunftswerkstatt folgt den drei Phasen:

Kritikphase: Fokussiert auf einsamkeitsbedingte Scham und deren Ursachen

Utopiephase: Entwicklung kreativer Ideen, um Scham zu überwinden und Einsamkeit zu lindern

Realisierungsphase: Erarbeitung konkreter Umsetzungsmöglichkeiten in Kleingruppen

15.00 – 15.30 Uhr

Kaffeepause

15.30 – 16.00 Uhr

Erstes Resümee – Ausblick für das World Café am Folgetag

16.00 – 18.00 Uhr

Rahmenprogramm der vier Symposien im Auditorium

18.00 Uhr

Abendessen im Festsaal

22.00 Uhr

Ende des 2. Tages

Programm

Freitag, 4. Juli 2025

World Café: Organisation der Ergebnissicherung

08.30 – 09.00 Uhr **Begrüßungskaffee**

09.00 – 11.30 Uhr **World Café**

Das World Café dient dazu, einen gemeinschaftlichen Dialog zu fördern, Wissen auszutauschen und neue Ideen zu entwickeln. Hier besprechen die Teilnehmenden, welche Ergebnisse des Symposiums in die Ergebnissicherung in der Publikation aufgenommen werden sollen.

An zwei Thementischen werden die folgenden Fragen erörtert:

Welche Aspekte, die in den Panels diskutiert wurden, sollten im Tagungsband dokumentiert werden?

Welche Lösungsideen aus der Zukunftswerkstatt sollten unbedingt Eingang in die Dokumentation finden?

11.30 – 12.00 Uhr **Abschlussreflektion**

12.00 – 13.00 Uhr **Bericht aus den vier Symposien im Auditorium**

13.00 Uhr **Mittagessen im Festsaal**

14.30 Uhr **Ende der Themenwoche und Abreise**



Theme Week: Fostering connection in existential phases of life: How do we enhance death and grief literacy, 2-4 July 2025



You will stay at: Grand Palace Hotel,
Lavesstraße 77, 30159 Hannover



Venue: Xplanatorium
Kongresszentrum, Herrenhäuser
Str. 5, 30419 Hannover

Day 1	July 2, 2025 8.30 am: Coffee and Registration 9.30 am: Auditorium: Official start of all Theme weeks by the Volkswagen-Stiftung 1.00 pm: Official start of “our” Theme Week End: 5.00 pm 6.00 pm: Dinner
Day 2	July 3, 2025 9.00 am: Plenum End: 5.00 pm 6.00 pm: Dinner
Day 3	July 4, 2025 9.00 am: Plenum 2.30 pm: End of Theme Week and departure
 Contact Person: <u>Anna Wolf</u>, +49 1575 0122975 <u>Kerstin Kremeike</u>, +49 177 490 52 27	

OVERVIEW

Time	Wednesday, 2.7.2025	Thursday, 3.7.2025	Friday, 4.7.2025
8:30	Registration and coffee	Arrival and coffee	Arrival and coffee
9:00		Discussion and Talk on “Experiences of loss, grief and loneliness”, Els van Wijngaarden	Results tour, Talks: “Cultural and Gender Diversity and the Experience of Loneliness at the End of Life”, Lilith Raza “Digitalization vs. loneliness at the end of life”; David Blum
9:30			
10:00	Needs assessment in small groups	Coffee break	
		Fishbowl discussion on concepts and strategies	
10:30	Lunch		Closing meeting with all symposia funded by the Volkswagen-Stiftung
11:00			
11:30	Lunch	Lunch	
12:00			
12:30			
13:00	Welcome and introduction of symposium	Talks:“Compassionate communities and loneliness at the end-of-life”, Allan Kellehear; “Death and Grief Literacy in Practice”, Kerrie Noonan	Lunch
13:30			
14:00		World Café on dealing with loneliness in the context of serious illness and at the end of life	
14:30			
15:00	Coffee break & a stroll trough the park		
15:30			
16:00	Afternoon program with all symposia funded by the Volkswagen-Stiftung		
16:30		Plenum Discussion of strategies and concepts Talk “Loneliness and desire to die in severe illness”, Raymond Voltz	
17:30			
18:00	Dinner	Dinner	
18:30			
19:00			

PROGRAM

Symposium 02.-04. July 2025 - XPlanatorium Herrenhausen, Hanover

PLEASE NOTE: In two theme weeks in June and July 2025, the Volkswagen Foundation is funding eight symposia that examine the topic of loneliness from a holistic, interdisciplinary and intersectional perspective.

In addition to ours, three other symposia will take place during the second theme week. Within our agenda you will see some programme units that will be held together with all the symposia taking place at the same time, which we have marked in yellow.

Wednesday, 2.7.2025	Theme of the day: The impact of loneliness in the context of serious illness and at the end of life
8.30 am	Registration and Coffee
9.30 am	Auditorium: Official start of the Theme week by the Volkswagen-Stiftung
12.00 pm	Lunch
1.00 pm	Plenum
2.30 pm	World Café • Alternating small groups • Discussion of various aspects of dealing with loneliness in the context of serious illness and at the end of life
4.00 pm	Coffee break
4.15 pm	Plenum • Discussion of strategies and concepts for the clustered needs • Presentation “Loneliness and desire to die in severe illness”, Raymond Voltz, Professor and Director at the Department of Palliative Medicine, University Hospital Cologne, Germany
6.00 pm	Dinner

Thursday, 3.7.2025	Theme of the morning: The experience of loneliness in the context of grief
9.00 am	Plenum • Discussion of experiences • Presentation “Experiences of loss, grief and loneliness”, Els van Wijngaarden, PhD, Professor at Radboud University Medical Centre, Netherlands
10.00 am	Coffee break
10.15 am	Needs assessment in small groups
11.00 am	Plenum • Fishbowl discussion on concepts and strategies
12.00 pm	Lunch

Thursday, 3.7.2025	Theme of the afternoon: From solitude to solidarity
1.00 pm	Plenum • Presentation: “Compassionate communities and loneliness at the end-of-life”, Allan Kellehear, Professor for Health & Social Care, Department of Social Work, Education and Community Wellbeing, Northumbria University, Newcastle, UK • Presentation: “Death and Grief Literacy in Practice: Fostering Social Connection and Collective Action”, Kerrie Noonan, Director of Research at Western NSW Local Health, District and Professor at the Palliative Care Public Health Unit of La Trobe University, Australia
2.15 pm	Workshop: Death Literacy in Action by Kerrie Noonan
3.30 pm	Coffee break & a stroll trough the park
4.00 pm	Afternoon program with all symposia funded by the Volkswagen-Stiftung
6.00 pm	Dinner

Friday, 4.7.2025	Theme of the morning: Linking results of the workshops, deriving research questions and political demands for more solidarity in existential phases of life
9.00 am	Plenum • Results tour / mind mapping: “What have we gathered so far?” • Presentation: “Living Between Borders: Cultural and Gender Diversity and the Experience of Loneliness at the End of Life – A Perspective from a Trans Woman from Punjab, Pakistan”; Lilith Raza, Specialist consultant and project manager, LSVD⁺ - Queer Diversity Association, Germany • Presentation: “Digitalization vs. Loneliness at the end of life”; David Blum MD PhD, Professor UZH, Head of Palliative Care, University Hospital (USZ) and City Hospital Zurich (STZ), Switzerland
10.30 am	Coffee break
10.45 am	Plenum • Analysis of results: Recap of all the workshops in a nutshell closing round
12.00 pm	Closing meeting with all symposia funded by the Volkswagen-Stiftung
1.00 pm	Lunch
2.30 pm	End of theme week and departure



PARTICIPANTS IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER

Prof. Dr. **Julian Abel** became a consultant in palliative care 2001, working initially at a district general hospital and a hospice. He focussed on building compassionate communities around people at end of life, running projects at local, regional and national levels. He is an international keynote speaker and has published regularly on models of public health palliative care. He and Professor Allan Kellehear are the editors of the Oxford Textbook of Public Health Palliative Care.

Marte Fleur Antonides is a Dutch PhD candidate at Radboud University Medical Centre in the Netherlands. Trained as a medical doctor and care ethicist, her research focuses on end-of-life decision-making processes and euthanasia. She is particularly fascinated by the relational aspects of these complex choices.

Prof. Dr. **David Blum** is certified in Internal Medicine and Oncology and is a specialist in Palliative care. He worked at the European Palliative Research Center in Trondheim Norway, the Cicely Saunders Institute London, UK and the University Clinic Eppendorf, Hamburg Germany. Since 2019 he is Assistant Professor for Palliative Care at USZ/UZH Zurich. His research encompasses symptom assessment and digitalization, drug repurposing, and early integration of palliative care.

Prof. Dr. **Luc Deliens**, PhD, is a sociologist and professor of palliative care research at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel and founding director of the End-of-Life Care Research Group in Belgium. He is president of Public Health Palliative Care International (PHPCI), the leading international professional association on public health palliative care.

Dr. **Thomas Dojan** holds degrees in philosophy (PhD) and psychology (MS) and is certified as a trained psycho-oncologist by the German Cancer Society (DKG). He has worked as research fellow at the University Hospital in Cologne in Germany where he contributed to qualitative and mixed-methods health service research with a focus on dealing with the desire to die in palliative and hospice care. His other research interests include phenomenology, psychoanalysis and the medical humanities.

Dr. phil. **Axel Doll** is a specialized oncology/palliative care nurse and lecturer for palliative care education (nursing, medical students, multiprof.) more than 20 years, now in the University Hospital Cologne, Germany. His research focus is on patient and family education in palliative (home) care. As a member of a EAPC Taskforce, he developed recommendations to foster a LGBT+ inclusive Palliative Care and works with peers on the implementation in Germany. The LGBTIQ* Community has a significant higher risk for loneliness.

Dr. **Franziska Ecker**, originally from Austria, is a physician in training for internal medicine at the Department of Palliative Care of the Medical University of Vienna and a PhD candidate in the field of mental health. She holds diplomas in psychosomatic medicine and palliative care and is currently completing further training in psychotherapeutic medicine. Her work focuses on holistic and psychodynamically informed approaches to end-of-life care.

Kristin Fellbaum has been teaching and conducting research at the Institute for Rehabilitation Sciences at Humboldt University Berlin since 2017. Her research focuses on palliative care for people with intellectual disabilities and on children and youth with life-limiting illnesses. Further information about her work can be found on her website: www.kristin-fellbaum.de.

Annika Fritzsche is a project manager for events and public relations at the Department of Palliative Medicine at the University Hospital Cologne. She holds a M.A. in cultural, linguistic and media studies. As coordinator of the high school project "Endlich. Umgang mit Sterben, Tod und Trauer" she is part of



the German Hospice and Palliative Care Association's Work Group „Learning Hospice“ and the Caring Community Work Group “Children and Teenagers”. Originally from Kempen, a small town near the German-Dutch border, she experienced living in many places in and outside Germany before finding a true home in Cologne.

PD Dr. **Franziska Herbst** is a German social anthropologist and the Head of the research department of the Institute for General Practice and Palliative Care at Hannover Medical School. Her primary research focus is qualitative and mixed-methods health services research with informal caregivers in end-of-life situations. She acts as a spokesperson for the Research Working Group and for the Humanities and Social Sciences professions Section of the German Society for Palliative Medicine (DGP).

Jala El Jazairi is juriste and human rights expert focusing on Migrants and woman issues. Originally from Syria came to Germany in 2014 and since contributed in the Integration, intercultural dialogue and mutual understanding. Since 2021 she works as a coordinator for the intercultural opening in Palliative and hospice Care in Unionhilfswerk -Berlin fostering connections between diverse communities, creating platforms for exchange and collaboration. Promoting through the support different projects for equal access to the health system and advocating for diversity specially for migrants facing incurable illnesses and at the end of life.

Melanie Joshi is a registered nurse, holds a Master's degree in Latin American Studies and Social Sciences, is a doctoral candidate in the Interdisciplinary Public Health Sciences and works in Palliative Care Research with focus on qualitative methods at the Center for Palliative Medicine, University Hospital Cologne.

Allan Kellehear OBE is a medical and public health sociologist and Professor of End-of-Life Care at Northumbria University in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, UK. He is widely recognized as founder of the international public health (health promotion) approach in palliative care, also known as the compassionate community movement.

Markus Keller graduated in social pedagogy and economics and lives in the Netherlands. His German company realises projects to support the labour market and social integration of long-term unemployed individuals, particularly refugee women. The projects use theatre pedagogy as a central methodological approach and are also carried out tailored for people with physical or mental impairments, for people with language support needs and for single mothers. In addition, Markus Keller advises municipal organisations as well as executives in public institutions and the private sector.

Susanne Klie is a long-term experienced nurse and palliative care specialist in outpatient care, research assistant, and coordinator of volunteers in hospice services at the Department of Palliative Medicine, University Medical Center Göttingen in Germany. Since 2023 she coordinates the “Caring Community Göttingen”, a hospice and palliative care network spanning both the city of Göttingen and the rural area around it (funded by local authorities and health insurance) that aims to support the community in the care for severely ill and dying people.

Dr. **Aniela Knoblich** (she/her) is a self-employed funeral speaker, grief counselor, dementia-sensitive music facilitator, and diversity expert. A literary scholar and teacher by training, she gained her PhD with a book-length study on the reception of ancient Greek and Latin literature in contemporary German poetry, taught German and Latin in secondary education, and worked as head of the gender and diversity office at the University of Freiburg. Besides her work on grief, she is currently employed as an expert on gender-sensitive personnel development with the City of Karlsruhe. She lives in Freiburg im Breisgau.



PD Dr. **Kerstin Kremeike** is a trained physiotherapist, social and health scientist. She leads a research group at the Centre for Palliative Medicine at the University Hospital Cologne in Germany. Her qualitative and mixed-methods health services research focuses on dealing with the desire to die, dying in hospital, and death and grief literacy in the society. Dr. Kremeike is a spokesperson for the specialist group 'Last Year of Life' at the German Network for Health Services Research (DNVF), and a board member of the German Association of Palliative Medicine (DGP).

Dr. **Carolien van Leussen** is a researcher at Radboud University Medical Center in Nijmegen, the Netherlands. She is a PhD candidate in the research group 'Meaning and Ethics at the End of Life'. Her research focuses on how end-of-life care is shaped through interactions between professionals, patients, and their close ones, both at home and in the hospital.

Mareike Löbbberding, M.Sc., is a health services researcher and registered nurse. She works as a research associate in the Department of Palliative Medicine at the University Hospital of Cologne. She is interested in the development and evaluation of complex interventions with a focus on participatory methods and the improvement of health care for people with serious illnesses and their relatives.

Agata Malenda, MD, PhD is a physician specializing in internal medicine, hematology, and palliative care, with extensive experience in supporting patients at the end of life. She is also a board member of Institute of the Good Death Foundation and is actively involved in medical education and interdisciplinary research, with a particular focus on ethical dilemmas, communication, and the well-being of healthcare professionals. At the symposium, she will contribute insights from her clinical work and qualitative research on end-of-life care in Poland.

Dr. **Clément Meier** completed a PhD in the Humanities and Social Sciences of Medicine and Health at the University of Lausanne. In 2024, he began working as a Postdoctoral Researcher at the Faculty of Business and Economics at the University of Lausanne. His interests lie in public health, with a focus on health literacy related to end-of-life issues and their association with end-of-life care decision-making and planning in the older population.

Mr. **Saif Mohammed** is a public health and palliative care professional based in Kerala, India. He was the first State Project Manager for Palliative Care under the National Health Mission in Kerala. He currently serves as a consultant and faculty member at the WHO Collaborating Centre at the Institute of Palliative Medicine, leading capacity-building efforts across low- and middle-income countries. Saif is actively engaged in advancing death literacy and leads the International Bereavement Companionship Program, developed by IPM WHO CC in collaboration with the Death Literacy Institute, Australia.

Daniela Mruck works for the Legal Health Insurance and concludes contracts with Institutes of Hospice Care. She is passionate about the further Development of Palliative Care.

Bianca Neumann, MRes, PhD Candidate, is Clinical Director of Grief and Bereavement at Sue Ryder. As psychologist, she leads the charity's online and in person grief and bereavement services, which provide around 11,000 counselling sessions each year to people in the UK. She is completing a PhD in palliative care at Lancaster University, has published research in the field, and has completed an international fellowship in palliative care. Bianca is a member candidate of the International Work Group on Death, Dying and Bereavement and contributes to the National Bereavement Alliance's Specialist task force. She is a regular voice in the media, having spoken in various radio interviews and written articles read by millions. Bianca is a leading advocate for grief literacy and public health approaches to bereavement, including Sue Ryder's Grief Kind initiative.



Dr. **Kerrie Noonan** is a clinical psychologist, social researcher, and educator specialising in public health palliative care. With 30 years of experience, her work explores the social and cultural dimensions of caregiving, dying, death, and grief, focusing on formal and informal caregiving, end-of-life care, and how individuals and communities develop death and grief literacy. Kerrie is based in Australia.

Dr. **Christian Ntirimira**, a pioneer of palliative care in Rwanda and acclaimed as the leading African author of the SAFARI Concept, is internationally recognized for integrating the Ubuntu philosophy and socio-cultural values into compassionate healthcare. Based in Kigali, Rwanda, he has transformed the narrative of serious illness care by advocating for dignity, humanity, and community-centered approaches. Deeply rooted in African traditions, his work bridges global best practices with local realities, promoting sustainable, culturally appropriate palliative care. Through research, education, and policy influence, Dr. Ntirimira is redefining how life, suffering, and death are honored across diverse settings in Africa and beyond.

As managing director, **Karin Ohler** takes care of (almost) everything at Caring Community Cologne, a project that strengthens Cologne residents on the topics of serious illness, dying, death and grief. She studied communication sciences and has many years of experience in digital start-ups and public relations. Every day, the Cologne native is driven by the question: What kind of society do we want to live in, and how can we better deal with existential crises?

Dr. **Bert Quintiens** is a post-doctoral researcher at the Vrije Universiteit Brussel (Belgium). His research interests revolve around public health approaches to the end of life, with an emphasis on Compassionate Communities and co-creative approaches. He is the coordinator of the Compassionate Communities Center of Expertise and general secretary of Public Health Palliative Care International (PHPCI).

Lilith Raza: Specialist consultant on “Projekt Fluchtgrund: queer-Queer Refugees Deutschland,” queer activist. Since 2015, she has been campaigning for the rights of LGBTIQ* refugees in Germany. She has rendered outstanding services to the common good. She is also a certified online consultant, advisor, and empowerment trainer.

David Roth is funeral director and death educator at the funeral home Pütz-Roth (www.puetz-roth.de), he has a diploma in business administration, studied at Mount Ida College in Boston and is a trained Myroagoge. Additional trainings and internships led him around the world. Born in Bergisch Gladbach and practicing in the Cologne area. He is passionate about death and grief literacy and engages in many public projects to normalize the experience of death, dying and bereavement and to facilitate a living mourning culture.

Dr* **Joh Sarre** (yo, they) holds a PhD in Social Anthropology, with a focus that included, i.a., Muslim burial practices in Kenya. Joh has lived and worked in Austria, Kenya, Nepal, the Netherlands, Tanzania, and Uganda, before returning to their hometown of Freiburg, Germany, a few years ago. Since then, Joh has been working independently as a lecturer, coach, and trainer, offering workshops and trainings on academic writing, diversity and queer topics. Yo keeps flirting with the idea of getting into research again and is interested in trans*/queer experiences with the end of life. More about Dr* Joh Sarre: www.joh-sarre.de

Dr. **Sven Schwabe** is a health care researcher at the Institute for General Practice and Palliative Care at Hannover Medical School, Germany. He holds a PhD in sociology, is specialising in inter-professional cooperation in hospice and palliative care and currently explores the practice of suicide assistance in Germany. He is also curious about the development of artificial intelligence in palliative care.



Prof. Dr. **Francis Seeck** is a Professor of Social Work with a focus on democratic and human rights education at TH Nuremberg. Their research centers on classism, democratic education, gender and queer studies, diversity, and human rights-based social work. They hold an PhD in Cultural Anthropology and published several books, including the manifesto "Access Denied" (2022) and "Classism and Social Work" (2024).

Dr. **Nele Stadtbäumer** is a psychologist and CEO of grievy, the market leader in digital grief support. She specializes in developing innovative approaches to psychological support for individuals experiencing loss and bereavement. Her expertise combines psychological knowledge with digital technologies to provide accessible and contemporary assistance to people during difficult life transitions.

Andreas von Stedman is a German publisher and managing director of Velbrueck GmbH.

Dr. **Steven Vanderstichelen** is a post-doctoral researcher working at the End-of-Life Care Research Group at Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB) & Ghent University. His main research interests and ambitions are to further develop knowledge and insights into volunteering in palliative care, the role of volunteers in facilitating access to care, community engagement, participatory research and the development of compassionate community models in end-of-life care.

PD Dr. Dr. **Julia Strupp** is a health and social scientist and a health services researcher specialising in palliative care. Her areas of expertise include implementing innovative health and social interventions, and conducting comprehensive assessments of care quality from the perspectives of patients, relatives, and healthcare professionals. She also identifies regional care deficits to inform targeted improvements. Dr Strupp employs a variety of research methods, integrating qualitative and quantitative approaches and utilising both primary and secondary data sources. She leads a research team on advancing health services research in palliative care.

Thessa Thölking is a Dutch-German PhD candidate at the Radboud University Medical Center (Nijmegen, The Netherlands). Her current research is a longitudinal, multiperspective qualitative study on end-of-life decision making of older adults with multimorbidity. With a background in medicine and care ethics, her interests lie in existential topics regarding ageing and dying.

Prof. Dr. **Raymond Voltz** has held the Chair of Palliative Medicine at Cologne University Hospital since 2004 and is Director of the Center for Palliative Medicine. He is on the steering board of the German National Palliative Care Guideline, chairs the Palliative and Hospice network Cologne and sits on the steering board of Caring Community Cologne. His scientific work focuses on the further development and evaluation of palliative care structures, the desire to die and the dying phase, palliative care in neurological diseases and neurological symptoms in palliative care.

Dr. **Els van Wijngaarden** is a care ethicist and associate professor in Meaning and Ethics at the End of Life at Radboud University Medical Center in Nijmegen, the Netherlands. She holds a degree in Religious Studies with a specialisation in Existential Counselling and Health Chaplaincy in Organisations. Her PhD focused the experiences of relatively healthy older people with a strong wish for a self-directed death and was awarded the prestigious Research Prize 2017 of the Praemium Erasmianum Foundation. Her ongoing research focuses on ethical and existential questions surrounding death and dying in old age, particularly the role of choice and control and the socio-cultural dynamics shaping contemporary experiences of ageing and dying.

Dr. **Birgit Weihrach** is a physician, specialized in social medicine and a former State Secretary with 25 years of experience in health politics. She was chair of the German Hospice and Palliative Care Association (DHPV) from 2006-2012 and one of the initiators of the Charter for the Care of the critically ill and the Dying in Germany. Since 2016 she has been actively engaged in different initiatives on the community level in Cologne, also as one of the initiators of Caring Community Cologne.



PRACTICAL INFORMATION

TICKETS FOR LOCAL TRANSPORT

We have purchased special tickets that can be used on the local busses and metro on the three conference days (July 2 to July 4). You will receive the tickets upon checking in at the hotel.

REIMBURSEMENT OF TRAVEL COSTS

To get your travel costs reimbursed, please email the completed reimbursement form together with your tickets and other documentation (e.g., boarding passes, receipts) to: anna.wolf@uk-koeln.de (deadline: July 31).

TEAM MEMBERS

Chair: Kerstin Kremeike and Julia Strupp

Facilitator: Bianca Neumann

Administration and general support: Anna Wolf

CONTACT

For general inquiries regarding the symposium, please contact us at kerstin.kremeike@uk-koeln.de and anna.wolf@uk-koeln.de.



Bildnachweis: goodstudio/Canva Pro

Perspektiven einsamer und nicht-einsamer Menschen auf Einsamkeit und soziale Einbindung

Symposium im Rahmen der Themenwoche
„Gem/Einsamkeit“ der VolkswagenStiftung

2.–4. Juli 2025 | Hannover