

Unaccompanied dying: examining the case for further research

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Institutional dying alone

- Hospital ward or care home
- Alone at moment of death, by chance
- Body found some time later

Living and dying alone

- Normally live alone
- Die while alone at home
- Body found some time later

Alone at the end of life

- Normally live with others
- Alone at the moment of death, by chance
- Body found some time later

What is known

- 43% of over 60 year olds live alone, 25% have no family nearby
- Policy focus on choice of place of death – expected to be home
- Moment of death historically significant
- People die alone at home & body undiscovered long time: negative media portrayals
- Some fear dying alone & not being found
- Live alone, no informal carer, less likely die at home

What is assumed

- Dying people should always be accompanied

Challenges to assumptions

- People often die when left alone
- Dying alone at home may be exercise in agency, resistance, dissent
- Some may prefer to die alone

Research needed

- Views of individuals who live alone about risk of dying alone & being undiscovered
- Case studies where this has happened
- Perspectives of formal & informal carers
- Is being accompanied by others a necessary component of a good death

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