ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to explore the input General Practitioners (GP’s) have in the delivery of end of life care from their perspective. The methodology used was Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) which is a qualitative approach that is concerned with the examination of how people make sense of life experiences.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with four GP participants, one female and three male, at their surgeries which are supported by the researcher in her role as a Macmillan Clinical Nurse Specialist. The interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. The data was analysed by the researcher using a six step approach to IPA as described by Smith et al (2009). By reading and re-reading the transcripts, initial noting took place which led to the development of emergent themes. Further exploration was carried out which revealed connections across the emergent themes and patterns across cases. Three main themes developed Communication, The role of the GP and Team working.

Findings from the study suggest that there is some ambiguity in the participants’ perceptions of their role in end of life care. Some viewed themselves as the ‘key worker’, but others described themselves as a coordinator of care. Communication between secondary, primary and specialist care providers was highlighted by all participants as a challenge which needs to improve to ensure continuity of patient care especially out of hours.

In conclusion the findings suggest that the GP plays a key role in end of life care and to ensure that the highest possible standards of care are delivered roles need to be clearly defined and communication across all sectors and professionals in the patients pathway needs improving.