Music therapy in palliative setting
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Background
In palliative stations and hospices it is tried to provide care and support which respond appropriately on dignity, quality of life and autonomy of terminally ill persons in their last days. The use of music therapy is one way.

Objectives
The health technology assessment (HTA) report describes the efficacy of music therapy for palliative patients.

Methods
Studies which match pre-defined inclusion criteria have been searched by an electronic literature research in 34 databases using search terms like music therapy, palliative medicine etc. for 2007 until 2012.

Results
Six studies are included, among them one review, one randomised controlled study (RCT), three pre-post-studies and one cost-benefit-analysis. Studies from Germany do not match the inclusion or quality criteria. There is weak evidence that music therapy has effects on the improvement of psycho-physiological well-being of dying persons.

Discussion
The number of studies which evaluate the efficacy of music therapy is extremely limited. The studies are of low quality, the risk of bias is very high. Most of the studies have small samples, the randomisation is often not clearly explained. The music intervention takes 20 to 60 minutes and is mostly not controlled. The measurement of the efficacy is done immediately after the intervention, follow-up measurement does not exist for longer time periods. There is great doubt about the validity of the results.

Conclusion
Based on included studies no validated recommendation for or against the use of music therapy can be given. There is a need for additional high quality studies to provide an evidence-based recommendation for or against the use of music therapy in palliative medicine.