Volunteering as a form of civic engagement is firmly embedded in society. It has a particularly strong history in healthcare and volunteers have been present in palliative care since the early days of the hospice movement. Volunteers are expected to play an even more substantial role in future palliative care.

Our relationship with death and dying has changed drastically over the last century. In the face of increased financial constraints and staff shortages in the healthcare system, public health proponents and government policy developers increasingly emphasise the role of the community in delivering care provision. Volunteer work may represent one important avenue through which communities may be engaged in health care and health services may provide a fruitful, facilitative framework for this endeavour.

This dissertation explores palliative care volunteering in the Flemish healthcare system through quantitative and qualitative studies from the perspective of health services, volunteers, patients, family caregivers and healthcare professionals. It aims to explore the characteristics of organised palliative care volunteering in the Flemish healthcare system in terms of tasks, support, roles, involvement and collaboration of volunteers.