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**Prof. dr. Luc Deliens, Supervisor**

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## INVITATION to the Public defence of

### Julie STEVENS

To obtain the academic degree of

**'DOCTOR OF SOCIAL HEALTH SCIENCES'- VUB  
'DOCTOR OF HEALTH SCIENCES' - UGENT**

**Advance care planning in general practice and beyond  
A cluster-randomized controlled trial of the ACP-GP  
intervention**

The public defence will take place on

**Friday, 23 February 2024 at 5 p.m.**

**In Auditorium Piet Brouwer**

Faculty of Medicine and Pharmacy, Laarbeeklaan 103, 1090 Brussels

**and can be followed online**, accessible through the following link:

[https://qf.vub.ac.be/redirects/PhD\\_defense\\_Julie\\_Stevens.php](https://qf.vub.ac.be/redirects/PhD_defense_Julie_Stevens.php)

## Summary of the dissertation

People diagnosed with a chronic, life-limiting illness may be confronted with complex choices about their medical care. Advance care planning (ACP) is a communication process between the patient, health care professionals, and loved ones, about the patient's values, wishes, and goals for care. By discussing these topics in a timely manner, all involved parties can be better prepared for medical decision-making in the moment and in the future. Outpatient settings, such as general practice and primary care, have been proposed as ideal for initiating and facilitating ACP. However, deficits remain in ACP in this setting, including in Belgian general practice.

To mitigate barriers and maximize facilitators to ACP in Belgian general practice, a complex intervention, the ACP-GP intervention, has been developed. In the first part of this dissertation, the intervention is implemented and evaluated through a cluster-randomized controlled trial with a parallel process evaluation.

The second part of this dissertation complements the first by describing insights into the implementation of ACP interventions internationally. This is accomplished through a scoping review of the literature and a qualitative study of clinicians' experiences implementing an ACP pathway in two Canadian provinces.

## Curriculum Vitae

Julie Stevens (1992) graduated summa cum laude in 2014 as a Bachelor of Arts from Stetson University in Deland, Florida, where she majored in Psychology and German and minored in History. In 2017 she graduated magna cum laude from Ghent University as a Master of Science in Clinical Psychology. In September of 2018, she joined the End-of-Life Care Research Group as a junior PhD researcher.

Her advisory committee is composed of Prof. Koen Pardon, Prof. Aline De Vleminck, Prof. Luc Deliens, and Prof. Peter Pype. After her first year, she was granted a predoctoral fellowship in Fundamental Research from the Research Foundation Flanders (FWO). Her research focuses on Advance Care Planning in general practice. She also has a special interest in understanding the complexity of mechanisms and impact of ACP. For her doctoral research, she conducted a cluster-randomized controlled trial and process evaluation of a complex ACP intervention for patients with chronic, life-limiting illness in general practice (the ACP-GP intervention). In 2022, she obtained a grant from the VUB Doctoral Schools of Life Sciences and Medicine for a short study visit at the McMaster University Department of Family Medicine, Division of Palliative Care.

The findings of her doctoral research have been published in international, peer-reviewed journals, and disseminated through presentations at national and international conferences.