



Capacity building for pediatric palliative care professionals and researchers in the Czech Republic for MSc. and PhD. research and study opportunities at King's College London

Introduction

The Vlček Family Foundation was established to support families affected by a child's life-threatening or life-limiting illness. We strive to ensure high-quality and accessible pediatric palliative care in the Czech Republic, built on the principles of evidence-based medicine.

To achieve this, we create educational opportunities for key professionals and work to attract students and professionals to the field, aiming to build a strong network of experts with international reach.

For this reason, we are launching a Grant Call: **Capacity Building for Pediatric Palliative Care Professionals and Researchers in the Czech Republic for MSc. and PhD. Research and Study Opportunities at King's College London**—specifically for students, future, and current professionals in fields relevant to pediatric palliative care.

King's College London (KCL) is the fourth oldest University in England (founded 1829). A research-led university based in the heart of London, it has more than 33 000 students (of whom nearly 11,700 are graduate students) from 190 countries worldwide and some 8000 staff. In the 2021 Research Excellence Framework (REF) King's was ranked 6th nationally in the "power" ranking, which takes into account both the quality and quantity of research activity, and 7th for quality according to Times Higher Education rankings. It is the largest centre for the education of healthcare professionals in Europe; no university has more Medical Research Council Centres.

KCL has nine Faculties. Vlček Family Foundation offers the MSc and PhD programme support at Florence Nightingale Faculty of Nursing, Midwifery, and Palliative Care.

The Cicely Saunders Institute is the world's first purpose-built Institute dedicated to palliative care. It houses a large multidisciplinary research team including 8 Professors, a full clinical team, dedicated lecture space and a patient and family walk-in support and information centre. The Institute is part of the Florence Nightingale Faculty of Nursing Midwifery and Palliative care, ranked by QS a 2nd in the world and 1st in the UK for nursing, and its academic output is ranked similarly for palliative care. KCL is part of King's Health Partners, an Academic Health Sciences Centre.

Postgraduate research opportunities at KCL

A. [MSc programme](#)

The King's College London MSc in Palliative Care is one of the world's most acclaimed post-graduate programmes in palliative care. This multi-professional course, jointly developed by King's College London and St Christopher's Hospice has supported the career development of hundreds of healthcare professionals across the globe. The underpinning philosophy of MSc is to enable students to develop essential skills to appraise palliative care evidence, conduct high quality palliative care research, improve clinical practice, and develop palliative care services across the world. Students will gain an enhanced understanding of physical, psychosocial, spiritual and ethical issues in palliative and end of life care, and their assessment and effective management. The international and multi-professional programme provides a rich learning environment, where students from all multiple professions and cultures are enabled and facilitated to share their experiences and support each other's learning through groupwork, seminars, online forums and classroom discussions.

The MSc Palliative Care will support students' career development, positioning them to be the future leaders in palliative care and advancing the speciality.

Module attendance will involve live teaching in the Institute or virtual attendance via Microsoft Teams (The Vlček Family Foundation supports only in-person attendance for the modules. Virtual participation is allowed only in case of serious personal reasons). Each module runs in two-week blocks, with 30 - 35 hours of teaching (around 3 hours of teaching per day). Modules include a mix of educational materials such as narrated PowerPoints, forum discussions, quizzes, reading, and analysis of policies or published academic papers. Module content will be available to you at least one month prior to the module commencing.

MSc students are required to take 4 modules and a Research Study Project (60 credits). The current module choices are:

- Research Methods and Statistics in Palliative Care: (30 credits) (Compulsory for all students)
- Assessment and Management of Symptoms in Advanced Diseases (30 credits)
- Service Management and Policy (30 credits)
- Applying Psychosocial, Cultural, Ethical and Spiritual Issues to Palliative and End of Life Care (30 credits)
- Applying Epidemiology in Palliative Care (30 credits)

B. [PhD programme](#)

KCL has the highest PhD completion rate in the UK. In preparing students to become knowledgeable and competent researchers, supervision is provided by academic staff with expertise in a wide range of research and clinical areas. The Institute's multidisciplinary environment combines social science, psychology, nursing, medical and health services research.

The topic areas for the PhD students will align with priorities of the Vlček Family Foundation and supervision will include experienced supervisors in both Paediatric Palliative care and the relevant research methodologies.

Objective of this Scholarship Program

With this scholarship program, the Vlček Family Foundation aims to support the development of pediatric palliative care (PPC) in the Czech Republic through a long-term international scholarship. The selected scholars will have the opportunity to study at the renowned King's College London in the UK, where they will receive the knowledge, skills, and support needed to conduct research based on analyzing data from the Czech Republic.

Since access to relevant data in pediatric palliative care is crucial for advancing the field, this initiative is designed to support activities that improve the situation of seriously ill children, their families, and the professionals working in this area.

A key element of this scholarship is the opportunity to collaborate with leading international researchers in pediatric palliative care. The selected scholars will have a unique chance to work with renowned experts, who will provide specialized support, mentorship, and guidance throughout their research projects.

Pediatric palliative care requires specialized knowledge and a multidisciplinary approach, and working alongside top researchers will allow participants to gain the latest insights and perspectives in the field. This will ensure that their research projects are not only relevant but also well-designed and effectively conducted, leading to high-impact research outcomes.

We believe that research, combined with direct collaboration with leading experts, can lead to valuable findings and innovations, serving as a foundation for implementing change and improving the care of seriously ill children in the Czech Republic.

Eligible Applicants

- **Professionals** working with seriously ill children and their families;
- **Researchers and academics** focusing on pediatric palliative care (PPC);
- **Students** in fields relevant to PPC.

Focus and Expected Outcomes

The expected outcome of the scholarship is the completion of a PhD or MSc degree at King's College London. This opportunity will not only allow the scholar to develop research skills but also to gain new perspectives and establish connections with leading global experts in the field. We believe that this step will integrate the scholar into the broader international academic community, enhancing their ability to drive innovation and contribute to the development of PPC in the Czech Republic.

Research Topics in Pediatric Palliative Care

Applicants have the opportunity to propose their own research topic. This allows them to focus on specific issues or research gaps they consider important and relevant for the pediatric palliative care field in the Czech Republic. However, when formulating their research proposal, it is essential to ensure that the topic is relevant, original, and beneficial to the field.

Vlček Family Foundation is ready to facilitate consultations with experts in the Czech Republic to help applicants refine their research focus. Moreover, collaboration with researchers from King's College London is considered crucial for shaping and specifying the research topic. This collaboration will enable applicants to receive expert guidance and support in defining their research questions, methodology, and data collection, significantly contributing to the success of their research project.

Overall, it is essential that applicants carefully consider their research topic and data selection to ensure their work makes a meaningful contribution to the advancement of knowledge and practice in pediatric palliative care.

Support from the Vlček Family Foundation

The Vlček Family Foundation fully covers the tuition fees for two MSc. (full-time or part-time) and two PhD. (full-time) students. However, future students are expected to contribute to their living expenses. Any additional support for living costs and its amount may be subject to individual scholarship applications.

Application for the Vlček Family Foundation Scholarship

The application must be fully completed in the [GRANTYS system](#), and all required documents must be uploaded as separate attachments (menu "File"). Incomplete applications or missing attachments may result in disqualification from the selection process.

Required attachments:

- **Motivation Letter to the Foundation's Board of Directors** – Describe what interests you most about **pediatric palliative care**, and why the Foundation should support you. Your letter should also include an answer to the question: "*What do I aim to achieve in pediatric palliative care, and how would I like to contribute to its development?*" Additionally, you are asked to briefly outline your proposed research topic and its relevance to the advancement of pediatric palliative care in the Czech Republic.
 - **Maximum length:** 1,000 words
 - **Language:** English
- **Two Letters of Recommendation** – Recommendations can be written by your supervisors, colleagues, teachers, or other professionals who support your professional development.
 - **Language:** Czech or English
- **Financial Plan** – Provide an estimate of your annual study expenses (excluding tuition fees, which are fully covered by the foundation). Include costs for accommodation, food, transportation, and other living expenses. Also, list any additional financial sources you plan to use (e.g., personal savings, other scholarships, etc.).
 - **Language:** Czech or English
- **Academic Documents:**
 - If you are a full-time university student, please submit a copy of your *Transcript of Records*.
- **Proof of English Proficiency** – If you have a language certificate, please attach a copy (not mandatory).

Application Process Schedule

- **10th March** – Information Webinar
- **19th March** – Applications open
- **4th April** (10:00 – 14:00, online) – Optional 1:1 consultations (Jana Krákorová)
- **16th April** (12:00 – 16:00, online) – Optional 1:1 consultations (Jana Krákorová)
- **11th May** – Application deadline
- **12th – 15th May** Initial selection process: Applications received by the deadline will be reviewed.
- **16th May** – Notification of results and announcement of candidates proceeding to the follow-up selection round.
- **20th – 21st May** – Follow-up selection round at the Vlček Family Foundation
- **By 2nd June** – Final selection and nomination of successful candidates for the KCL selection process which follows.
- **July (TBC)** – Final decision by the Vlček Family Foundation Grant Committee

Conditions for Financial Support

- **By signing the Scholarship Agreement, the scholar commits to working in the PPC field in the Czech Republic for at least three years** after completing their studies.
- To receive financial assistance, applicants must complete a grant application through the **GRANTYS electronic system**, available here: <https://www.nrv.grantys.cz>. If they do not yet have an account in Grantys, they must create one by selecting "**Create an account**" in the left menu on the **GRANTYS** homepage, filling in the required information, and completing the registration process. Once registered, they can log into their account and submit their application under the relevant call in the "**Calls**" or "**Projects**" tab.
- Applications must meet both formal and substantive requirements before being forwarded for further evaluation.
- Selected applicants will be invited to an interview after the first evaluation round, where they will present their proposal and motivation to the Vlček Family Foundation.
- The Foundation may request additional information or supplementary documents to clarify the submitted application.
- There is no legal entitlement to receive a grant, and the Foundation is not obligated to provide reasons for rejecting an application.
- The Foundation does not cover any costs or expenses incurred by applicants in relation to the submission of their applications.
- For the communication and promotion of the supported project and its outcomes, applicants are required to actively use the Foundation's logo.
- A contract will be signed with successful applicants, detailing the grant amount, purpose, conditions, and obligations under which the funding is provided.
- The granted funds must be used strictly in accordance with the contract terms, the approved research project (which is an integral part of the grant agreement), and applicable legal regulations.
- If the grant is misused, not utilized in accordance with the agreed conditions, or if the applicant fails to provide proof of its use without undue delay, the entire amount must be returned to the Foundation as unjust enrichment.
- If the scholar fails to complete the program without valid and justified reasons (such as medical issues, pregnancy, or serious family circumstances), they will be required to repay a proportional amount of the scholarship funds.

Contact for consultations:



Vlček Family Foundation

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