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Grounded Theory, Phenomenology & Narrative Methodologies: Designing methodologically rigorous qualitative studies

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Meredith Vanstone, PhD

March 28, 2017

Michael G. DeGroote SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

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Grounded Theory, Phenomenology & Narrative Methodologies: Designing methodologically rigorous qualitative studies

DFM In Service
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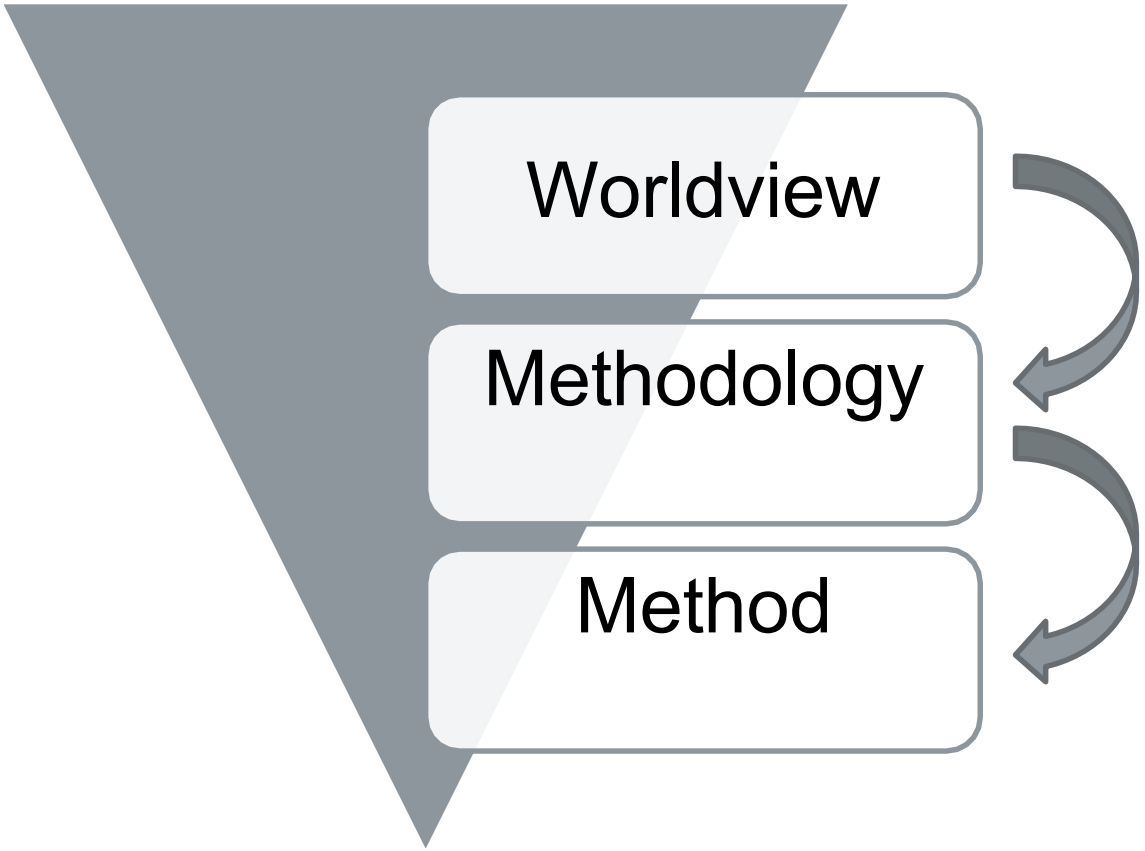
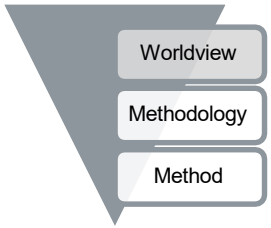
Today

1. Reminder: parts of a qualitative project
2. Overview of 3 methodologies
3. Introduction of topic
4. Small group design of project using selected methodology
5. Present study designs

Components of a Qualitative Research Study



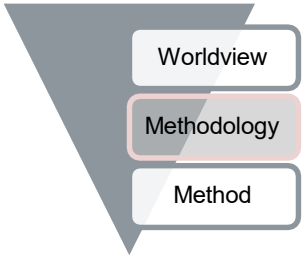


Worldview

- “Paradigm”, “Worldview”, “Epistemological Paradigm”, “Theoretical Tradition”

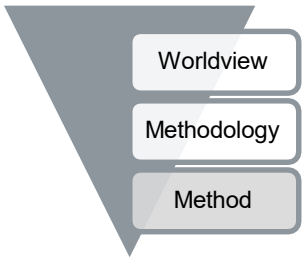
- Ontology (what exists) + Epistemology (what can be known) + Methodology (how we can know it)

- Foundation of all research, qual + quant



Methodology

- Package of guidelines for conducting qual research
  - Affiliated with a particular worldview/ epistemological paradigm(s)
  - Data collection guidelines
  - Sampling
  - Data analysis guidelines
- Developed out of different disciplines, each has a different focus.



Methods (Tools)

- Interviews
  - Semi-structured
  - Unstructured
- Focus Groups
- Observation
  - Participant/Non-Participant
- Textual Analysis
- Arts-based approaches
  - Photovoice
  - Mind map

Grounded Theory

Focus: How do people interact, take action, or engage in a process?

Among the most widely used qualitative methodologies, in many disciplines.

Question starts very broad, mainly to identify phenomenon of interest, and is refined as data collection progresses.

Grounded Theory

Disciplinary origin: Sociology

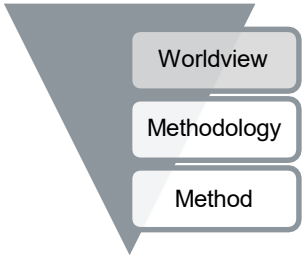
Theoretical Traditions: Objectivism/Post-Positivism (Glaser, Strauss & Corbin); Constructivism (Charmaz)

Theoretical foundation: Symbolic interactionism (how people define events and how those beliefs affect the way they act)

Main Authors: Barney Glaser, Anton Strauss, Juliet Corbin, Kathy Charmaz, Adele Clarke, Antony Bryant.

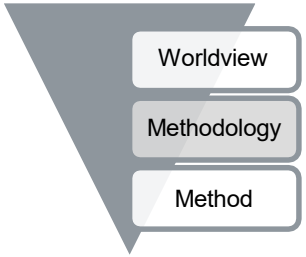
GT Example

- Hall, Tomkinson & Klein, 2012
- "How do care providers and women manage birth?"
  - Focus groups of women + health care providers (family docs, midwives, nurses, obstetricians, doulas)
- Generated a theory about how women and providers used different strategies to minimize risk and maximize integrity, including: accepting or resisting recommendations for surveillance and intervention; plotting courses v. letting events unfold.



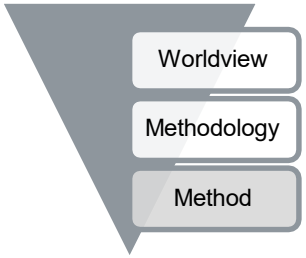
Objectivism

Constructivism



Grounded Theory

Constructivist Grounded Theory



Most common: Semi-structured Interviews, focus groups

Also acceptable: Document analysis, observation

Phenomenology

Focus: Describes the commonalities in the lived experience of several individuals. Questions often ask “what is the meaning” or “what is the experience”.

Aims to achieve a deep understanding of a phenomenon (means smaller samples). Interested in the everyday way in which people make sense of their “being” in the world. Descriptive Phen. posits the existence of an “essence” of a phenomenon which will be similar across multiple people.

Each person has a unique view of the world, and a particular social reality which is as true as anybody else’s reality.

Two very different branches

Descriptive Phenomenology

- Husserl: Experience as perceived by human consciousness has value and should be an object of scientific study
- Human action is influenced by what people perceive to be real.
- It's important for a researcher to shed all prior personal knowledge ("Transcendental subjectivity"- assess researcher impact to neutralize biases and preconceptions via bracketing)
- Assume there are common features shared by anyone who has lived the same experience. "Universal essence", can be extracted without consideration of context (objectivist)

Two very different branches

Interpretive (Hermeneutic) Phenomenology

- Heidegger. Hermeneutics is a process for bringing out what is normally hidden in human experience or relations.
- Beyond description of core concepts and essences to look for meaning embedded common life practices. Meanings may not be apparent to participant.
- Focus is on what humans experience rather than what humans know.
- “Lifeworld” idea that human reality is invariably influenced by the world they live in.
- “being-in-the-world” we cannot abstract ourselves from the world, therefore inquiry is about what narratives imply about everyday experience.

Lopez & Willis, 2004

Phenomenology

Disciplinary origin: Philosophy. Used frequently in Nursing research.

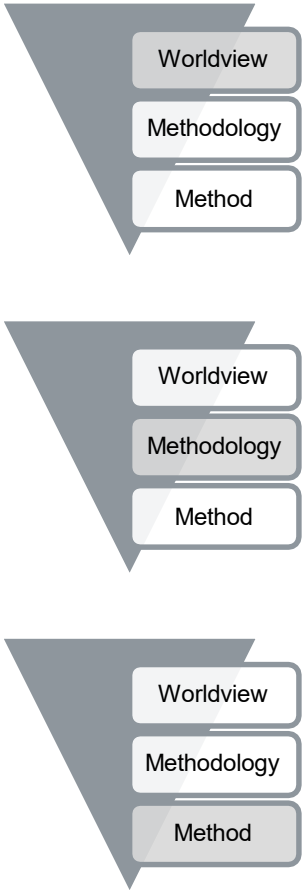
Theoretical Traditions: Varies significantly by author- typically identify as descriptive (positivist) or interpretivist.

Theoretical foundation: Existentialism (the way one views the world, emphasizing the 'here and now')

Main Authors: Max Van Manen; Moustakas; Merleau-Ponty. Informed by philosophers Husserl, Heidegger, Sartre.

Phenomenology Example

- Ouelette, Achille & Paquet, 2009
- "How do patients experience kidney graft failure"
  - Develop a comprehensive description of the way individuals constructed meaning out of this experience.
- Analysis of data identified five themes which the authors then compared to an existing theoretical framework about psychosocial transition.



Objectivism

Interpretivism

Descriptive Phen.

Interpretive (Hermeneutic) Phen.

Long, unstructured interviews. Often multiple interviews with the same person.

Narrative inquiry

- Begins with the experiences of individuals as expressed as stories. A narrative can be spoken or written, but it gives an account of an event or an action chronologically.

- Stories tell of experiences, but they also illuminate how a person understands and/or constructs their identity. Stories may be collected (found as-is), or constructed between participant and researcher. Also allows for creative methods of storytelling.

- No specific data collection or analysis techniques, although many authors have written about their own strategies. Very flexible methodology- really multiple methodologies falling under the same umbrella.

Disciplinary origin: Different social science and humanities disciplines, including literature, history, anthropology, sociology.

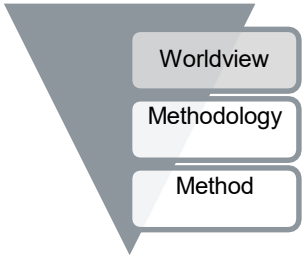
Theoretical Traditions: Constructivist, interpretive. Contextual, recognizing tentative and variable nature of knowledge.

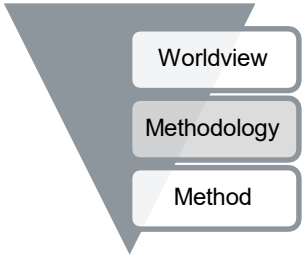
Theoretical foundation: Postmodern, psychological, sociological, developmental. Depends on type.

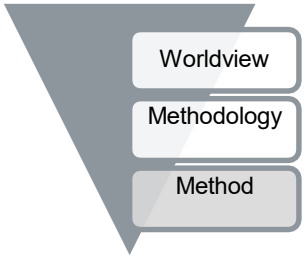
Main Authors: Clandinin and Connelly**, Czarniawska, Lichtmann, Spector-Mersel

Narrative Example

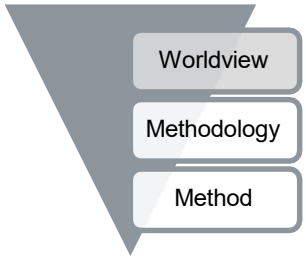
- Weber, Rowling & Scanlon, 2007
- “How do university students story the ways in which they cope with loss and trauma to find meaning in that experience”
- Findings: important for students to organize their experiences to make sense of them. In making sense, they imposed meaning by constructing and re-constructing stories of loss.







Hard to create a quick “cheat sheet” because there are so many different versions of narrative methodology

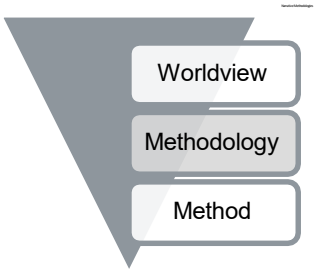


Narrative Worldview

- Paradigm described by Gabriela Spector-Mersel (2010)
  - Closely aligned with constructivism

- Suggests narrative inquiry is not a methodology but a theoretical perspective

- Useful for understanding the potential of narratives and why analyzing them can be meaningful or illuminating.

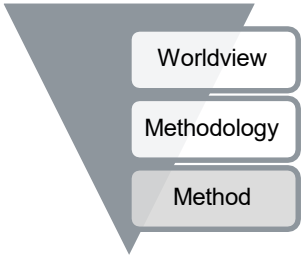


Narrative Methodologies

Strands:

- Realist
- Modernist
- Post-modernist
- Constructionist
- Phenomenological
- Performative

Narrative can be a methodology, but it's not just one methodology- need to be specific when you are talking about this. WHOSE conception of narrative, for what purpose, with what analytic strategies etc.



Narrative Methods

- Where are narratives gathered?
  - Interviews
  - Fieldwork
  - Naturally occurring conversation
  - News media
  - Documents
  - *(May be elicited or found)*
- What do they consist of?
  - Speech units as small as brief utterances
  - Topical stories about a particular event or person
  - Extended speech acts about substantial or compelling events (personal narratives- may also include informal written material)
  - Occur across long passages of time (e.g. one's entire life)
  - Accounts of political events and social change
  - *(anything that tells a story!)*

Parliament spoke: assisted suicide is bad for Canada
Legally endorsed suicide - easy to do. a hazard to your family
Will your "assisted suicide" really be under your control?
Legally endorsed suicide - easy to do a hazard to your family
Think about it!
Prevent elder abuse: no assisted suicide
Suicide-friendly "caregivers"? Think about it!
Stop the suffering! Legalize choice now
Dying With Dignity Canada
It's your life. It's your choice.
www.dyingwithdignity.ca
My life. My choice. My right.
I SUPPORT ASSISTED DYING
ALLOW ME TO CHOOSE

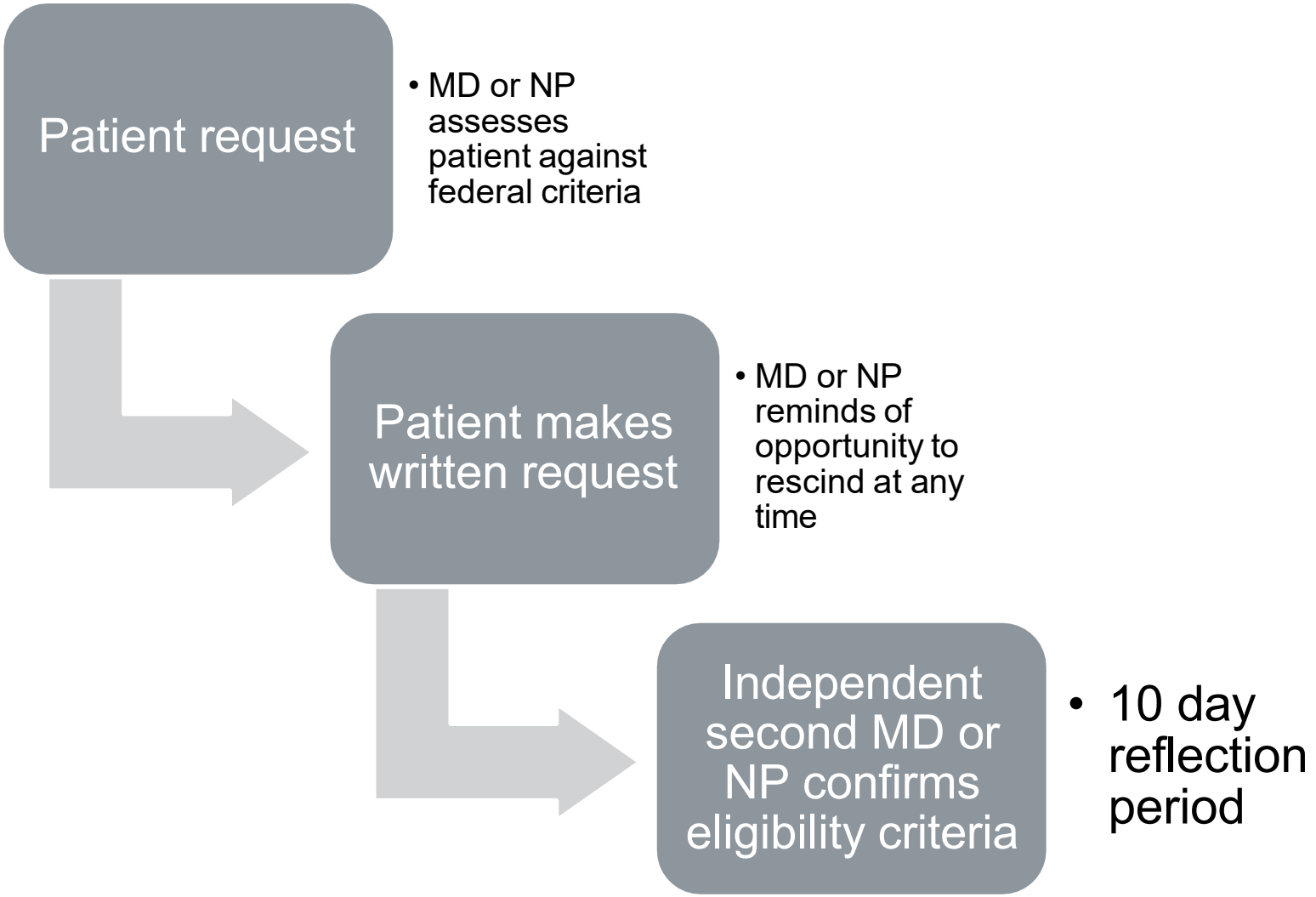
Medical Assistance in Dying (MAID)

- June 2016: legal framework
  - Eligible for health services in Canada
  - 18 years of age or older
  - Grievous and irremediable medical condition
  - Voluntary request without external pressure
  - Informed consent after being informed about means available to relieve suffering, including palliative care

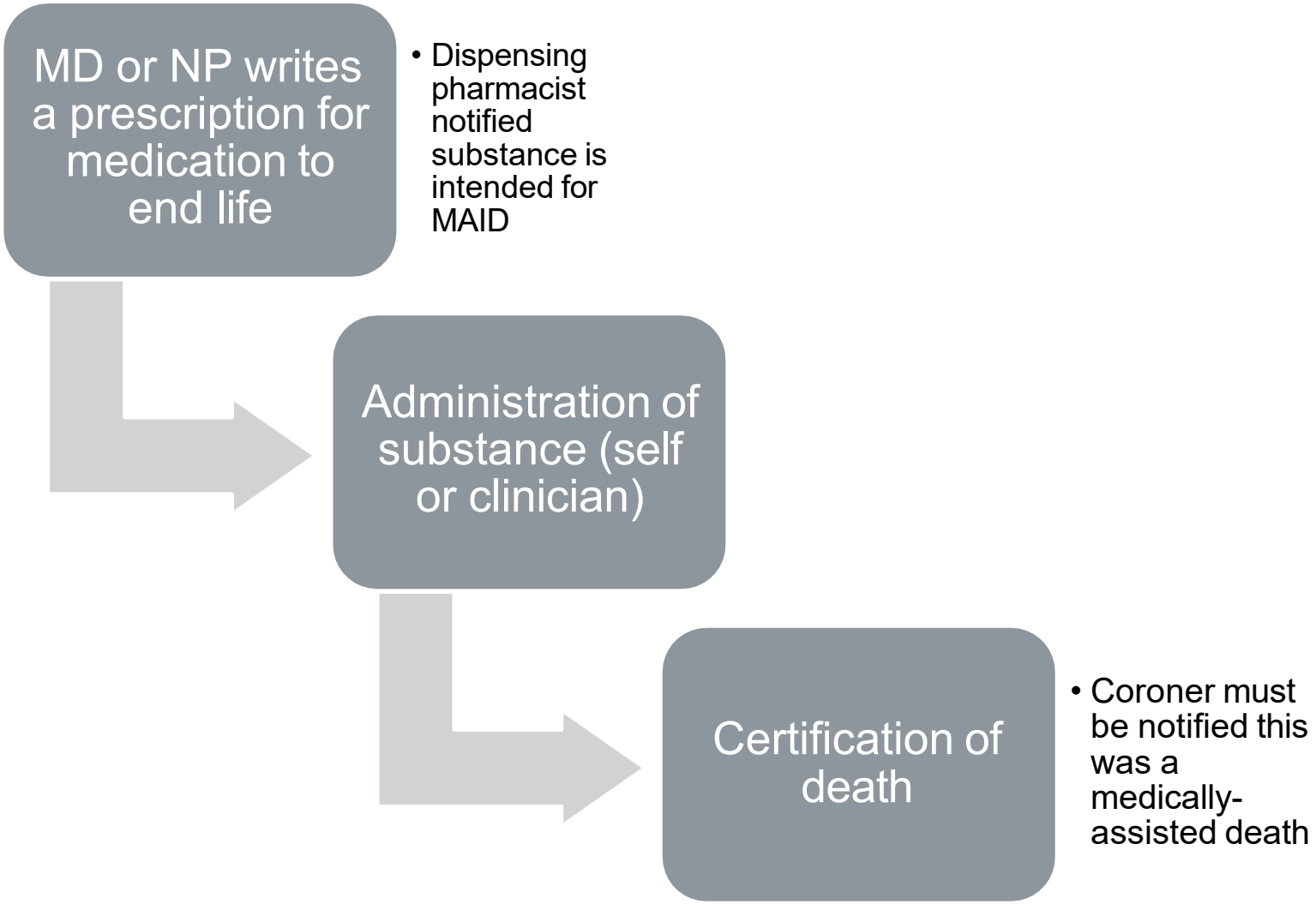
What is “grievous and irremediable” condition?

- Need to meet all of the following criteria:
  - Serious and incurable illness, disease or disability
  - Advanced state of irreversible decline in capability
  - Illness , disease or disability or state of decline causes them enduring physical, psychological suffering that is intolerable and cannot be relieved
  - Natural death has become reasonably foreseeable

CPSO Process Map



CPSO Process Map



Research Topic

- Hamilton has had second highest number of MAID requests in the country
- How do clinicians feel about involvement in MAID? How do they make sense of their own role in this?
- How do patients feel about the clinic doing this?

To get you started…

- *National Post* article " 'Take my name off the list, I can't do this anymore': Some doctors backing out of assisted death" February 26, 2017
- *CTV News*: At least 744 assisted deaths in Canada since law passed. Dec 28, 2016

Your task…

- Methodology
  - Research Question
  - Sample
  - Data Collection methods

  + anything else you would like to add: rationale, data analysis methods etc.

- One member to present your plan to broader group, one to take notes to share with Dee, Tejal & Nicolle (if you are agreeable)

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