



# Palliative care comics: Designing a person-centered patient education tool

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## Abstract

Palliative care improves patient health outcomes, but is often misconceived as end-of-life care. A **didactic comic** about palliative care is currently being developed to **improve patient understanding and acceptance of palliative care** in an engaging and approachable manner. Formative pilot testing (see **Figure 3**) will be conducted to inform the visual and narrative design of the comic.

## Introduction

**Palliative care** improves quality of life in patients with life-threatening illnesses, especially when initiated **early** in the illness trajectory<sup>1</sup>. Nevertheless, early referral and willingness to initiate palliative care are hindered by **stigma** and the misconception that it is for patients who have exhausted treatment options<sup>2</sup>.

**Graphic narratives**, i.e., **comics**, are promising media for addressing complex, stigmatized topics in medicine due to their unthreatening and accessible nature<sup>3</sup>. Comics can teach more effectively than verbal or text instruction alone and have proven useful in educating patients<sup>4,5</sup>.

Since palliative care is valued for being **person-centered**, i.e., holistic and patient-led<sup>6</sup>, comics may be uniquely suited to teach about this topic by embedding information in the context of an individual **patient journey** (see **Figure 2A**). Thus, this project will use the communicative power of comics to demystify palliative care, thereby encouraging timely use of palliative care services.

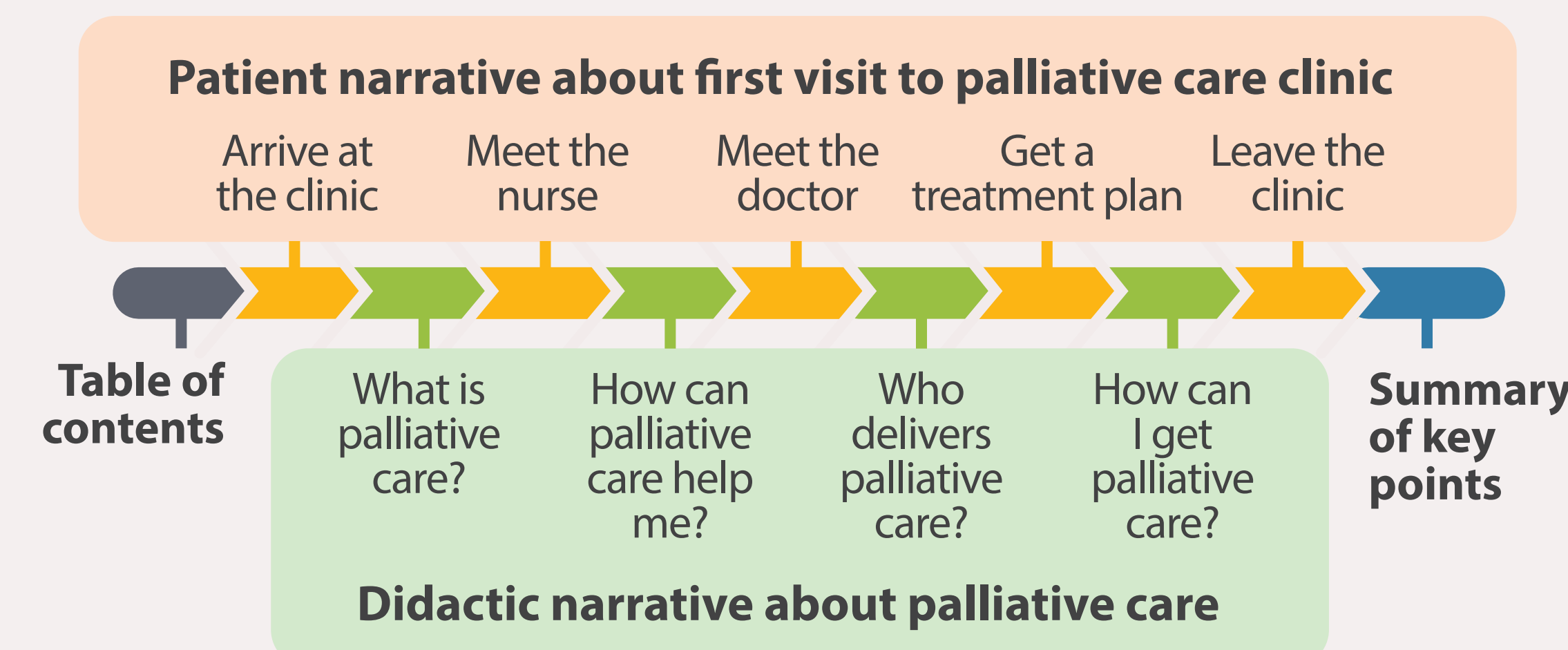
## Materials & Methods

**Target audience:**  
**Adult patients** who qualify for palliative care and their **caregivers**.

**Comic format:**  
32-page 5.5"x8.5" full color printed booklet. May be made available electronically.

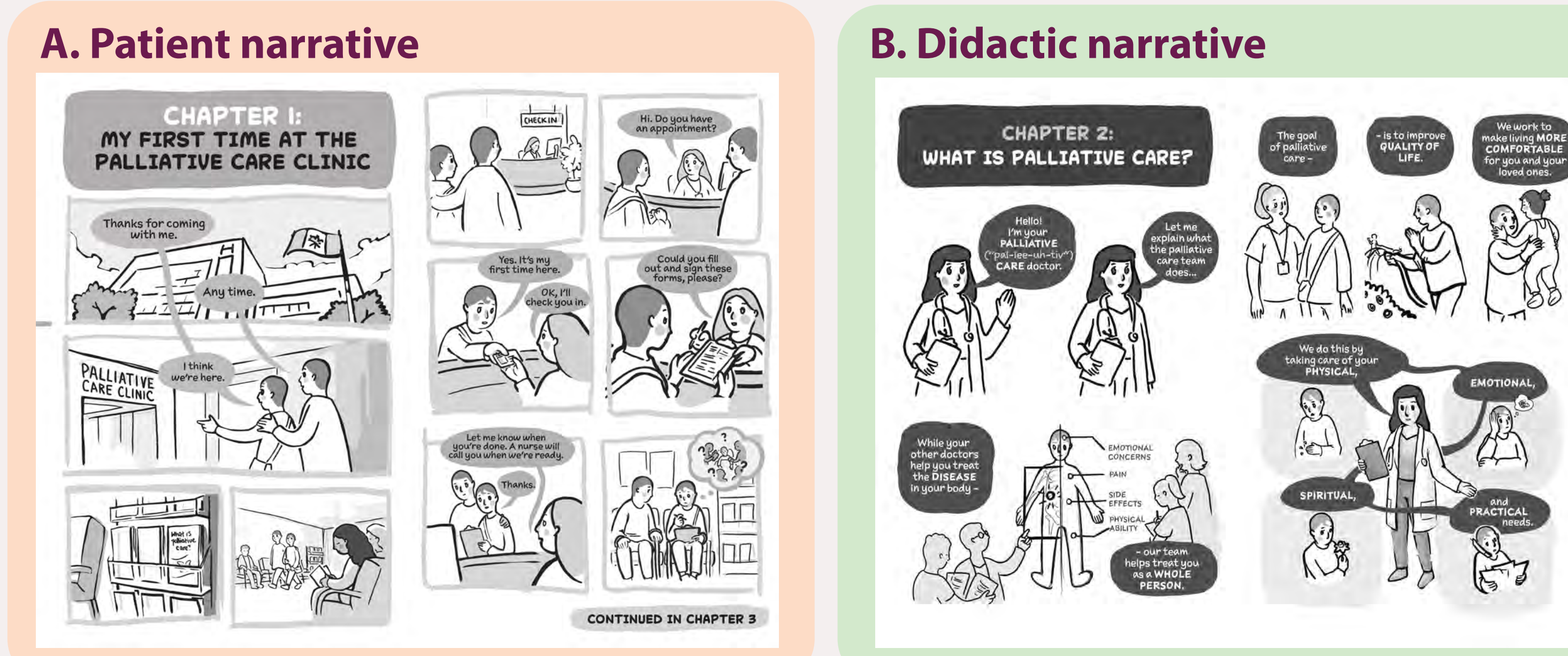
**Figure 1. Chapter structure of comic:**

The comic is sectioned by topic and has two parallel narratives.



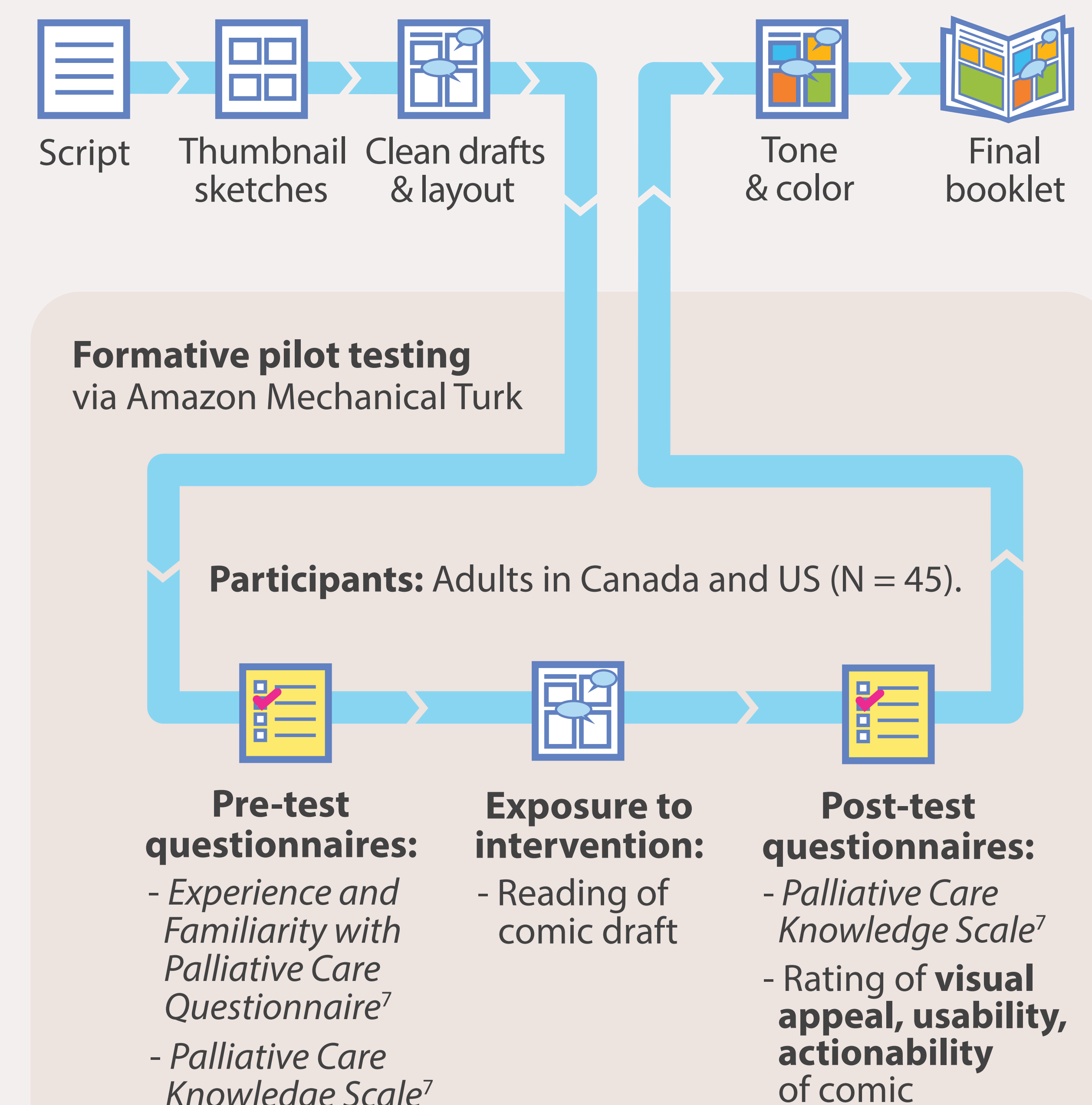
**Figure 2. Comic preview:**

Select draft spreads with primitive tonal rendering from the **patient narrative (A)** and the **didactic narrative (B)**.



**Figure 3. Overview of design process:**

A complete draft will be shown to a general population sample for **pilot testing**. Feedback will be incorporated prior to final rendering.



## Anticipated significance

The comic produced in this project may be a useful alternative or addition to traditional methods of disseminating information about palliative care to patients and caregivers. Future evaluations should be conducted with a patient and caregiver population to validate the comic's effects on their perceptions of palliative care.

## References

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