



PCAG

Palliative Care Association of Grenada

PCAG

Weekly Newsletter

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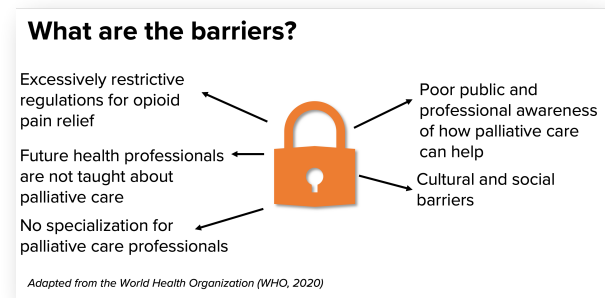


Introduction to Palliative & Hospice Care

“Medicine is not about conquering diseases and death, but about the alleviation of suffering, minimizing harm, smoothing the painful journey of man to the grave.” - Dr. Petr Skrabanek

The practice of medicine is often perceived only as an endeavour to treat illness and a strife to cure the incurable. While much of medicine aims for these objectives, there are patients that require more than treatment and novel therapies. For many patients suffering from chronic illnesses, such as cancer and heart failure, their treatments are often designed to alleviate their symptoms, prolong their life, and hopefully cure their ailments. Often in the experience of the patient, however, their treatments do not address their discomfort and suffering during the wearying process of healing. Palliative and hospice care is dedicated towards the alleviation of suffering, prevention of further discomfort, and for patients approaching the end-of-life, providing the utmost comfort, and honouring their wishes regarding their care.

Palliative and hospice care exist at the intersection of practically every other medical specialty. Patients with chronic illnesses can be referred to a palliative care team, a diverse group of healthcare providers including, but not limited to, physicians, nurses, physician assistants, psychotherapists, pharmacists, support workers, and even spiritual advisors. Each member of the palliative care team does their part in addressing their patients’ physical, psychological,



<https://www.paho.org/en/documents/infographic-improving-access-palliative-care-o>

social, and spiritual needs. Furthermore, collaboration and consultation with patients’ existing healthcare providers is essential as it ensures that their treatment goals are clearly defined and achieved. If medical interventions are not successful in curing or slowing down disease progression, and the prognosis is less than 6 months, patients may be eligible for hospice care. In this setting, medical treatments are aimed at symptom relief and providing comfort during the final stages of the disease.

According to the World Health Organization, over 56 million people are in need of palliative/hospice care every year, however, only 14% of these people actually receive it (WHO, 2023). The majority of patients receiving palliative care have chronic illnesses such as heart failure, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), cancer, and dementia, among others (NIA, 2021). A lack of funding and training for healthcare professionals, stringent regulations on essential palliative medications (ex. Morphine), and the increasing prevalence and age of patients living with chronic illnesses are a few challenges that are currently impacting the access and delivery of palliative care across the globe. It is evident that the need for palliative and hospice care will only continue to grow requiring a shift in national policies and physician training to ensure that patients’ needs are met early in the progression of their illness and especially during the end-of-life transition.



<https://www.vitas.com/hospice-and-palliative-care-basics/about-palliative-care/hospice-vs-palliative-care-whats-the-difference>

References

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2. National Institute on Aging. "What Are Palliative Care and Hospice Care?" Accessed January 27, 2023. <https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/what-are-palliative-care-and-hospice-care>.