



Cancer care

In Palestine

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Objectives

- **To discuss history of health care in Palestine**
- **To discuss Cancer care in Palestine**
- **Health care issues**
 - **Infrastructure**
 - **Patient care**
 - **Human resources**

Gaza



West Bank



Gaza population 1,324,991 million
covers an area of 360 square kilometers
West Bank population 2,311,204
million covers an area of 5,860 square
kilometers

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Palestinian Health Sector ...

- **The infrastructure of the governmental health system in Palestine is considered inadequate because the financial allocation for the health sector is centralized and insufficient. Funding and the allocation of resources are not equalized.**
- **There is no national strategy on cancer care.**

... Palestinian Health Sector

- **Palestinian Ministry of Health depends on external organizations to assist: European Commission, Italy, WHO, DFID and UNRWA, UNICEF. Thus, After recent elections, ban on funds from all international countries**
- **This system suffers from frequent shortages of medicines, medical supplies, equipment, limited nursing workforce and understaffed health facilities which make them unsuitable for adequate patient care, opioids are difficult to access.**

... Palestinian Health Sector

- **The Palestinian Authority is a poor resource area, where cancer services is limited to six different hospitals, in 3 hospitals in Gaza, and 3 in West Bank.**
- **Unequal access to chemotherapeutic therapy (some patients go to neighboring countries such as Israel, Jordan or Qatar)**
- **Access to medical care is severely hindered by the difficulties of traveling within the territories and getting through checkpoints.**

(World Health Organization, 2007).

Health expenditure (Intl \$) as a percentage of GDP: MECC countries

Country	% GDP
Israel	8.7%
Cyprus	8.1%
Jordan	9.5%
Turkey	5.0 %
Palestinian authority	2.4%

Source Palestinian central Bureau Statistics

Other services in Palestinian authority

- 1. Augusta Victoria is a non-governmental hospital that initiated cancer care.**
 - care is limited to 200 cancer patients for Palestinian who live in West Bank.**
 - Has the only radiation therapy machine in Palestine and covers patients from West Bank and Gaza.**
- 2. Palestinians may also access cancer services via Israeli services if they live in East Jerusalem and have an Israeli identity card and health insurance.**
- 3. If patients have the means to pay, there are oncologists who run small private oncology clinics in the West Bank, or patients are given referrals to services in Israel, Jordan, Egypt and other countries overseas.**

... Challenges in Providing Cancer Care

- **Infrastructure**
 1. **Healthcare infrastructure not well equipped for instruction in cancer care or the administration of chemotherapy**
 2. **Health care remains focused on hospital care, and many acute care hospitals lack the basic funding to maintain core palliative care teams**
 3. **Health insurance is not sufficient.**

Challenges in Providing Cancer Care ...

○ Patients

1. Most patients diagnosed with cancer struggle to get the care. The patient diagnosis is delay due to ignorance of accessing health care early or misdiagnosis by the health care professionals. As a result of late diagnosis, Palestinian has poor prognosis.
2. The problem of disclosure of the diagnosis and prognosis to cancer patients is one issue that most health care workers describes when providing cancer care in the Palestinian Authority.
3. There are several hospitals to care for patients, thus, the patients access to care differ from one area to another
4. No education or training in patient/family education regarding diagnosis, treatment, and symptom management
5. High nurse/patient ratio
6. No palliative care programs (patients die at home with minimal pain medication)

... Challenges in Providing Cancer Care

○ Nurses

1. **Basic training: 2-4 years of college or university nursing programs with no oncology content**
2. **Assignment to oncology units with “on the job” training and no theoretical background**
3. **Nurses had no prior formal education or training in the essentials of oncology (education limited to workshops or continuing education)**
4. **Very few training fellowships (those available are in neighboring countries e.g. Jordan and Israel)**

... Challenges in Providing Cancer Care

- **Nurses**
- 6. **Ongoing questions about cancer care with no available resources**
- 7. **Role of nurses limited to chemotherapy administration with few having appropriate training**
- 8. **Nurses working in oncology units require training in essentials of oncology care, symptom management, and palliative care**

Available Resources in Education & Training

- International Network for Cancer Treatment and Research (INCTR)
- Middle East Cancer Consortium (MECC)
- Commitment to enhancing knowledge and skills among health care professionals involved in cancer prevention and treatment in developing countries

Identified Educational Needs for Oncology Care

- Primary level: health awareness, diagnostic measures (most patients present with advanced disease)
- Secondary level: chemotherapy administration, overall care of patients undergoing therapy, importance of informing patients/families about illness
- Tertiary level: rehabilitation, palliative care

Future Plans for Palestinian

**Empower nurses working in West Bank and Gaza
Need to collaborate with organizations in neighboring countries to support Palestinian nursing workforce**



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Future Plans for Palestinian

Goals

1. **increase awareness of prevention**
2. **Develop a skilled oncology nursing workforce –**
 - **provide education about proper handling and safe administration of chemotherapy**
 - **improve skills necessary for effective communication with patients and families**
3. **foster ability to integrate knowledge and skills into nursing work and perform effectively as health educators for the benefit of patients and the community**

Future Plans for Palestinian

... Goals

4. **Improve the care and quality of life of cancer patients**
5. **Enhance the contributions of nursing in Palestinian cancer care services**
6. **increase awareness of palliative care techniques**