

Palliative Care Services in Israel

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Palliative care services have developed in Israel during the last 25 years. The different models are: In patient hospices, hospice home care, oncology nursing in the community, hospital based palliative care, volunteer hospice services, home Care Units and one mobile unit for the Bedouin population.

In Israel there are 3 Hospital based Hospices caring for about 1000 patients per year, they provide end of life care and support to cancer patients and families.

The first hospice was founded in 1983 in the "Sheba" Medical Center with 22 beds.

The hospice in Jerusalem has 14 beds and serves the Jewish, Arabic and Christian population of the city as well as the hospice in Haifa with 17 beds.

Palliative Care Services for Children are given within in patient hospice for children in "Sheba" medical center. Most of the pediatric oncology departments have: 1) home care services for children providing symptom management during treatment and end of life care. 2) Bereavement support groups for parents, siblings and grandparents conducted by nurses and social workers. 3) Support groups for young cancer survivors.

In Israel there are 7 home hospice units, they provide end of life care for patients and their families in the community. The service provided covers 24 hours a day 4 of them belong to the biggest health insurance, one of them to the Israel Cancer Association and the others are hospice based.

The 4 health insurance plans have 80 continuing care units in the country, they provide: medical, nursing and rehabilitative home care for patients, many of whom are elderly and suffer from a variety of chronic and functional disabilities. Most of them are cancer patients; they treat 3,000-4,000 patients a year. 30 Oncology Nurses certified in oncology nursing and palliative care work in the community in the whole country in the home care units along with the patients' direct caregivers. They guide other community health care providers coping with complicated situations and treatment; they coordinate the care between hospital and community services.

Hospital Based Palliative Care is offered by nurses trained in oncology and palliative care, and/or physicians who are specialist in anesthesiology or pain management. This team provides services to medical staff and patients in those hospitals.

There are 2 volunteer home hospices, one in the north and the other in the south of the country, they are staffed by 20 volunteers, established by people dedicated to the hospice ideas and provide psycho social, emotional support and coordinate services. Medical and nursing care is given by the local health services.

One Mobile Palliative Care Service provides palliative care for the Bedouin population in the Negev desert; they reach patients in their environment giving medical and nursing treatment and support.

National & Professional Organizations include Tmicha – the Israeli association of palliative care, established as a voluntary association in 1993 and represent all the profession involved in palliative care in the country. ICA -The Israeli Cancer Association and IPMS- the Israeli Palliative Medical Society, their aim is to practice and promote palliative care medical services,

Education - Basic principles of palliative care are taught in all Nursing Schools.

A palliative Care Module is taught in the post basic course in Oncology Nursing.

A Postgraduate diploma course for Physicians in the Tel – Aviv University, is offered yearly. INPACT - Israel National Palliative Care Training. One train the trainers

Course of 40 hour program was provided for Physicians, Nurses, Social workers who now have disseminated the knowledge in 6 courses over the country.

Conferences and Study Days: yearly conferences of the Israeli Oncology Nursing Society and Tmicha have a wide variety of palliative care topics, both adult and pediatric. Short courses or study days are carried out in the Israeli Cancer Association for nurses on pain and other symptoms like fatigue. A special publication of the Israeli cancer nursing society "Seud Oncology" presented guidelines for symptom management.