

PRACTICE OF PALLIATIVE CARE IN PAKISTAN

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Pakistan is a developing country with a population of about 150 million people out of which 45% are under 15 years of age. Majority of patients suffering with cancer have access only to Government hospitals with an oncology and radiotherapy units and radiotherapy centers run by Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission. Some are treated in NGO based Cancer Hospitals and Hospices. Only a minority is treated at Private Hospital. There is no national cancer registry in Pakistan. Most of the available information comes from hospitals based data or data form IARC registry in selected cities. The burden of Palliative care in this country is huge because of the advanced disease at presentation and low cure rate. Palliative care services are limited to pain control and mostly given as in patient in some cancer hospital and hospice. There are no specialist palliative care physician and nurses nor there is any government support for this. Morphine is available in limited quantity only in some large cities. Most people do not get morphine in this country. There is no psychosocial support team and home care for terminally ill patients in Pakistan . Having said that there is still a very good hope to develop a good palliative service in Pakistan. We have good oncology centers, motivated oncologists and nurses, philanthropists and good family system. We also have guidance of our expatriate colleagues and organization like INCTR (International Network Of Cancer Treatment and Research) who can help in training and education in this specialty.