



Reaching Out to them
... Together
E-Newsletter

PALLIUM INDIA
CARE BEYOND CURS

PJRRRA 65, Pothujanam Road
Kumarapuram, Trivandrum 695011
Kerala, India.
www.palliumindia.org

Phone +91 471 244 7101
Mobile: +91 938 729 6889
Fax: + 91 471 244 0306
Email: pallium.india@gmail.com

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"I never thought anyone would care to find out what I felt like. I did not think anyone would be interested. You gave me the chance to open my heart to so many people. I had never talked into a microphone in my life. I am full of gratitude to you. I do not know how I can thank you enough."

That was reassuring. And illuminating. We were wondering whether we did the right thing in arranging a get-together of patients and families at Trivandrum on World Palliative Care Day. For many, the local palliative care teams had made the travel arrangements, but some of them had to take a lot of trouble to come – getting into an autorikshaw or into a crowded bus even when they were so unwell. It was a sight to see Madhu (not his real name) refuse to be supported, but to pick up his tired and weak limbs cautiously and make his way by himself to the front of the hall. And we wondered whether we had, though with good intentions, burdened people.

But all the feedback we got was positive. And as we said earlier, illuminating. The program acknowledged them as people who are important and recognized them as individuals.

We doubt no longer. We shall do it again.

The sweetest ice cream of the year:

Mahima was a young girl whom we had the privilege of treating during the last few days of her life. She was unable to swallow even fluids when she came to us, but with treatment, she was able to enjoy a Biriyani a couple of days before she died. Manikantan, her father, had tears in his eyes when he talked about how fulfilled he feels that he was able to feed her what she

liked during those few days. He had undertaken a seven-hour train journey to be with us on World Palliative Care Day and to talk about his experiences.

Before he returned, he came to the Palliative Care Center to buy ice cream for all the nurses who helped to care for Mahima. What a treat! It came from the heart!

Thank you, State Bank of Travancore!

We really needed another vehicle in Trivandrum. We already had one, donated by "Care and Share". For our second home visit team we have been using a dilapidated hired vehicle and we were hoping for one when the Social Banking Wing of State Bank of Travancore (SBT) gave one. Ms Poonam Bagai, Vice Chairman of Pallium India, received it from Mr Jagannath, Managing Director of SBT, (and gleefully drove it around for a while) at Hotel Mascot at Trivandrum on 13 November 2009.

Sruthy Social Circle of SBT main branch in Trivandrum has been actively associated with us already – supporting several of our patients.

Thank you SBT!

Award to Dr K Suresh Kumar

Dr K Suresh Kumar, director of the Institute of Palliative Medicine at Calicut, was honored by AV Abdurahiman Haji foundation for his contributions to the field of education with their AV award. Congratulations, Dr Suresh Kumar!

There must be light at the end of the tunnel. But where is it?

Dr Ramesh Menon from Newcastle upon Tyne, UK writes:

"Thank you for the news item and informative links relating to the Human Rights Watch report.

I feel that the clinicians and NGOs in India expect support and leadership in terms of policy, funds and training to stem from the government as it does in nations that have a state-run healthcare system. Time has taught us that this is unusual. That the well meant policy on the use of morphine was made in Delhi in 1998 but not acted upon in many states shows how disordered and dichotomous our administration can be.

In the UK too, and I suspect other nations, there is a time lag between thought and action. This reflects complex processes dependent on various committees, stakeholders, holiday periods and political leadership. A couple of (the many) drivers for success include a healthy inquiring press and a system of incentives, both of which are significant reasons for successful implementation in the UK”

That is thought-provoking, Dr Menon. Thank you. The media would certainly have a major role to play and we should certainly step up our efforts at advocacy, even if sometimes we are accused of courting cheap publicity and self-promotion. The system of incentives is tough without government action – either in terms of money or career promotion.

Would any of our readers have any thoughts on this?

Best wishes Dr Mary Ollappally, and congratulations, Dr Shoba Nair

Dr Mary Ollappally, the founder of the palliative care service at the St John’s Medical College at Bangalore retired recently. Congratulations Mary, on all that you achieved. We wish you all the best for the future.

Dr Shoba Nair is the new head of the Department of Palliative Medicine at St John’s. Shoba had preliminary training in pharmacology in India; subsequently did internal medicine in the UK and worked there with a hospital-based specialist palliative care team, and was then awarded a Master’s in Palliative Care from Edith Cowan University in Perth, Australia. Congratulations and best wishes, Shoba.

High court order in Tamil Nadu

A case pending before the Madras High Court could have far-reaching implications for opioid availability. So far, drug controllers of states have had the authority to control and regulate manufacture and distribution of drugs. On September 1, 2009, the Drugs Controller-General of India under the Central Government’s ministry of health and family welfare ordered that the certification of manufacturers should be done by the central authority after inspection of manufacturing facilities. Madras high court has granted an interim stay for a period of eight weeks on a writ petition filed by the Tamil Nadu Drugs Control Officers' Association.

Oral morphine reaches one more country:

Dr Pati Dzotsenidze from Georgia writes to say that oral morphine is now available in Georgia. This is another positive outcome from the brilliant "International Pain Policy Fellowship" program conducted by the Pain and Policy Studies Group (PPSG) at Madison Wisconsin (<http://www.painpolicy.wisc.edu/>). Hearty congratulations to the team at Georgia and thank you very much PPSG for all that you are doing the world over!

Thank you, IACA, for your exemplary work

The Indo American Cancer Association (IACA) is a US based non-profit, public charity made up of oncologists of Indian heritage from the United States, India and the United Kingdom with a mission to make a difference in the treatment and care of cancer patients in India.

Writing on behalf of IACA, Dr. M.V.Pillai says:

"Already IACA has conducted two EPEC India (Education for Palliative and End-of-life Care) programs, one in Srinagar and one in Manipal. Now, IACA has begun funding a few centers starting with Cachar Cancer Hospital and Research Centre in Silchar, Assam, in Hakim Sanaullah Specialist Hospital & Cancer Center in Sopore, Kashmir and lastly Jabalpur Hospital in Madhya Pradesh. We are hoping our next support will go to SMS Hospital in Jaipur, Rajasthan and that we can help centers in each state.

We are very proud of the work done by Dr Ravi Kannan, Director of the Cachar Cancer Hospital and Research Centre in southern Assam. The hospital caters for a population of about five million and is located in the Barak valley and serves a geographic area that is relatively less easily accessible and a population that is extremely poor and underserved. There was no palliative care available for the majority of cancer patients who present in advanced stages. An average of 70 patients a month, nearly 50% of them earning Rs. 3000 (\$65) or less a month, coming from three districts of Assam, Tripura and Mizoram benefited from the service of the palliative care division from May to August 2009.

Dr HM Iqbal Bahar, head of the palliative care division at the hospital, says, "Your programme is for a humane cause...You feel the hearts of the people who toss in pain at the dead of the night, who don't have money to have a square meal a day. You feel that a dedicated

care like palliative care is required so that patients remain free of pain and other symptoms, live a life with dignity and when they die, they die healed.'

IACA hopes to partner with organizations in India that are already involved in addressing many of infrastructural needs to improve quality of life of cancer patients. We are asking that the hospital/institution provides the space, provision of medications, such as morphine, and key personnel be identified and committed. For each, IACA would provide salary support for a physician, clinic nurse and social worker. We realize that this work is a long process and we are willing to help in what little way we can and want to work together with the great efforts already being made."

More information can be found by sending an email to Jennifer Quintanilla at Jennifer@iacaweb.org or going to our website at www.iacaweb.org.

Cankids awards

Cankids...Kidscan is an organization doing exemplary work in the field of cancer care in children, based in Delhi. They have a **National Childhood Cancer Scholarship Program** for children with cancer who either have survived the disease or are undergoing treatment. In Cankids' own words, the scholarships are given:

- In recognition of the indomitable courage and honoring the bravery and spirit of children who have fought and survived, awarded to those children/teenagers who show exceptional will and determination to succeed and excel, despite their battle with cancer
- To encourage and motivate cancer-affected children to pursue a normal and natural academic and extra-curricular life and
- To prove to society that cancer is a disease that can be tackled with a positive attitude and spirit.

The winners this year were:

Adithi Adhikari (Noida) for academic excellence

Aman Tripathi (Noida) for academic excellence

Shikha Jain (Chattisgarh) for sports

Nikita Karnik (Mumbai) for creative writing

Anmol Sood (Mumbai) for creative arts

Chinchusha V (Kerala) for creative arts

Ritu Bhalla (Shahdara) for music and singing
Nitu Bhardwaj (Delhi) for community service.

Congratulations, winners, and thank you Cankids for this important work!

“Do I love my disabled daughter? With all my heart. Will it be a relief when she dies? Without question!”

Please read the poignant story written by a mother who has looked after her disabled daughter for 18 years and her questions to a hypocritical society.

(<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/femail/article-1227080/Do-I-love-disabled-daughter-With-heart-Will-relief-dies-Without-question.html#ixzz0XYuUD5NR>). How magnified would the suffering be in a developing country with no socialized medicine at all!

Thank you Moen Sen and Benita Sen, for bringing this to our attention.

Happy shopping, and we hope you will think of someone in need.

And best wishes every one for the month ahead. Most of you are going to be busy with your Christmas shopping and festivities. Let us remember the many people for whom the festivities are going to be rather subdued and who may even be confined to bed. Let us share a corner of our minds and wallets for them and make it truly a festive and sacred time.

Editorial Board:

K Govindan Kutty
A Salahuddin Kunju
C Mohanan
Javed Parvesh
M R Rajagopal

Pallium India (Registered Charitable Trust)
II Floor, S.U.T. Speciality Hospital. Plamood, Trivandrum 695004, Kerala, India

Phone : 91 471 244 0306 (office)
: 91 938 729 6889 (mobile)
Fax : 91 471 244 0306
Email : pallium.india@gmail.com
www.palliumindia.org