

PRESS RELEASE

Date: 08 October 2011

Indian Association of Palliative Care is concerned by a new study by the Worldwide Palliative Care Alliance (WPCA) which reveals that, out of the world's 234 countries, only 136 (58%) have one or more hospice or palliative care services available to seriously ill people and their families and carers.

The report, launched to mark World Hospice and Palliative Care Day 2011 (8 October), raises fresh concerns that worldwide too many communities are living and dying without adequate care, support and pain relief.

India has moved up to the Group 3b for having Generalised palliative care provision. Earlier the country was grouped under Group 2 for making capacity building activities.

Though the national coverage is still at a very low 2%, there is more generalised palliative care provision. More services are in South India, especially Kerala, which is attributed to the community mobilisation and involvement of local self government institutions in planning and providing palliative care. (Ref: Fact sheet on Non-communicable diseases and Palliative care, by WHO India and Ministry of Health Government of India, Aug 2011)

Medication for pain relief not accessible for 80% globally

Globally, an estimated 100 million patients and family caregivers would benefit from hospice and palliative care, but the WPCA report, released today shows, currently only a fraction have access to it. Hospice and palliative care improves quality of life by providing physical, emotional, social and spiritual support for people affected by life-limiting conditions throughout the course of their illness.

A fundamental component of palliative care is pain treatment but at present, 80% of the world's population live in countries with no or low access to medications to treat moderate to severe pain.

With an ageing population and global concern about the increasing burden of non-communicable diseases (NCDs), the WPCA is today calling for palliative care to be accessible to everyone facing a serious life-threatening illness, including the growing number of people living with NCDs.

Dr Stephen Connor, senior executive from the WPCA and one of the co-authors of the report, said:

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“We are encouraged that there has been a marked increase in the number of providers of hospice and palliative care (from 10,000 in 2006 to 16,000 in 2011). However, we remain extremely concerned that only 20 countries globally (8.5%) provide palliative care services that are fully integrated with wider health services.”

The WPCA welcomed the UN declaration on Non-communicable diseases (NCD's) which recognised the vital role of palliative care. The political declaration was adopted in the High-level meeting of United Nations on NCD's held in New York on 19th and 20th of September.

“Fortunately palliative care is increasingly being recognised as a human right and we were hugely encouraged by last month's UN declaration on NCDs which recognised the vital role of palliative care as part of the global response to NCDs.

“Yet huge barriers remain to achieving our vision for universal access to palliative care, particularly in improving access to controlled medications, including oral morphine for pain control.” Dr. Connor said.

World Hospice and Palliative Care Day-8th October 2011

On World Hospice and Palliative Care Day 2011, thousands of people in around 80 countries will be coming together at more than 1,000 events to celebrate, support and speak up about hospice and palliative care.

In India the various programmes are being planned; like a music programme in New Delhi to a rally and public meeting by students and volunteers in Kozhikode, Kerala. In many places in India like in Mangalore and Kannur painting, quiz and several other competitions are organised for students.

Dr. Anil Kumar Paleri, Hon. Secretary, Indian Association of Palliative Care and a member of the Board of Trustees of the Worldwide Palliative Care Alliance said:

“This World Hospice and Palliative Care Day we think of the many millions of people who are living in unnecessary pain and distress, unable to access any hospice and palliative care services. Today we call on all governments to make sure that such services are made available to all in need.”

To find out more about World Hospice and Palliative Care Day 2011 visit www.worldday.org
To get programmes in India visit www.palliativecare.in

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Mapping levels of palliative care development: a global update 2011

The full report will also be available to download from www.worldday.org from 8 October 2011.

Mapping levels of palliative care development: a global update 2011 was commissioned by the Worldwide Palliative Care Alliance (WPCA). The study was undertaken independently in consultation with the funding bodies. Principle authors:

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About World Hospice and Palliative Care Day 2011

World Hospice and Palliative Care Day (8 October 2011) is a unified day of action to celebrate and support hospice and palliative care around the world. Celebrations are being organised by more than 30 palliative care units in India.

For more information visit www.worldday.org

Programmes in India available at www.palliativecare.in

About the Worldwide Palliative Care Alliance

The Worldwide Palliative Care Alliance is an alliance of national and regional hospice and palliative care organisations, bringing together people around the world with a shared vision of universal access to quality palliative care.

For more information visit www.thewpca.org

About the Indian Association of Palliative Care

The National Association for Palliative Care in India working with the aim to make quality palliative care accessible to all.

For more information visit: www.palliativecare.in

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