



Reaching Out to them  
*... Together*  
E-Newsletter

**PALLIUM INDIA**  
CARE BEYOND CURE

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The palliative care physician asks, “What is your biggest concern?” The dying woman does not mention pain or fear of death or anything of that sort. Her complaint is that the food is terrible. The doctor fires warning shots; the patient does not “seem to hear the bullet whizzing past”. She wants to “be alive again”. She wants to go shopping. The doctor withdraws.

The dying patient has a right to be told that she is dying. But she also has a right not to be told, if she does not want to. Palliative care professionals need the sensitivity and the training to support patients through this most difficult time of their lives. This, and other facets of palliative care practice are brought out well in a New York Times article of 20 August 09 by Anemona Hartocollis, “At the end, offering not a cure, but comfort”. You can read it at [http://topics.nytimes.com/topics/reference/timestopics/people/h/anemona\\_hartocollis/index.html](http://topics.nytimes.com/topics/reference/timestopics/people/h/anemona_hartocollis/index.html) Ms Uma Vishnu, a journalist from New Delhi brought this to our attention within minutes of its publication. Thank you, Uma.

And thank you, Brian Nelson, for sharing your powerful story with us!

Please find a few minutes to read Brian Nelson about his cancer experience at <http://well.blogs.nytimes.com/2009/08/20/when-cancer-changes-your-appearance/>.

You cannot help admiring his sense of humour and his clarity of thought. But somewhere deep down you will also recognize the pain and suffering caused by a significant change in body image.

But do not stop reading when you are finished with the article. Take a few minutes more to scan through the comments that have been posted. You will see at least one of professional insensitivity, sadly enough.

Donald McNeil Jr was the one who sent us this link so promptly. Remember Donald? He was the one to do a series of articles on Pain and Opioid Availability in New York Times in September 2007. The series won him an award which he was unable to accept because New York Times’ rules did not permit him to. Thank you, Donald for writing!

CNN, Lance Armstrong Foundation and cancer:

CNN.com Live, the Internet's live video news service, will stream a roundtable of global cancer experts, advocates and researchers from the LIVESTRONG Global Cancer Summit at Dublin at 1700 hours GMT (10.30 PM IST) on 23 August 2009. The program will address global issues concerning cancer including palliative care.

Another first for Kerala:

On 28 July, the Government of Kerala issued an order incorporating palliative care into primary health care in the state. We join the global palliative care community in congratulating the Government on this significant step. This action follows another first in April 2008, when the Government of Kerala declared a State Palliative Care Policy which envisaged integration of palliative care into routine medical care. Pallium India had submitted the proposal for State Palliative Care Policy in 2005, prepared the draft, and had done much to follow up the matter. To those in Pallium India who are chagrined to find that its role is not acknowledged, let us quote Rachel Naomi Remen, “You can get a lot done in this world, if you do not care who gets the credit.”

Improved cancer care allocation by Government of India.

Budget allocation for cancer care has gone up 10 fold to 25,000 million Indian Rupees under the current (11th) five year plan. Palliative care features as part of the program. We hope and pray that there will be a realistic system of implementation in place.

Pallipedia from IAHPC

The International Association for Hospice and Palliative Care (IAHPC) has announced the launching of Pallipedia, a free online palliative care dictionary to be built by the international community, under the auspices of IAHPC.

Pallipedia offers two options to visitors:

Searching for a term or concept related to the field of Palliative Care. The searching capability includes stop words and query language.

Submitting a term or concept related to the field of Palliative Care. Accepted terms and concepts are automatically indexed in alphabetical order.

The dictionary is housed in [www.pallipedia.org](http://www.pallipedia.org)

Poster Exhibition by Palliative Care Network.

Palliative Care Network has announced a poster exhibition. Three entries will be selected for cash prizes. For details, please visit

<http://www.pcn-.com/community/pg/profile/Posters2009>

Good news from Colombia:

Remember Rima? Her mother Amine had placed an ad in a Colombian newspaper pleading for morphine for her daughter in pain. Rima did not get morphine (<http://www.palliumindia.org/newsletter/newsletter-sept2008.pdf>). She died in pain. Well, we have good news to report from Colombia now. Marta Leon's ecstatic email announces: "I have great news from COLOMBIA . After all the work finally, we have at least one place with 24/7 ( 24 hours a day/ 7 days a week) in each state in Colombia!!!!!!". Hearty congratulations to you and to your colleagues, Marta.

What happens when you withdraw opioids abruptly?

We find interesting information on the consequences of sudden cessation of opioid therapy in a recent paper by Ruth Drdla et al (Science, 10 July 2009; Vol.325, no.5937, pp 207-210. Abrupt withdrawal from  $\mu$ -Opioid receptor (MOR) agonists induces long-term potentiation (LTP) at the first synapse in pain pathways. The result would be accentuation of the pain. Withdrawal LTP can be prevented by tapered withdrawal.

Damning evidence against tobacco.

Thomsen T et al report in British Journal of Surgery (2009;96:451-461) their results from a meta-analysis of 11 randomised trials involving 1194 surgical patients. Nine of these studies had biochemical validation of cessation of smoking. Cessation of smoking at least one month before the day of surgery significantly reduced postoperative complications and mortality.

Certificate course at MNJ Institute of Hyderabad:

In 2006, MNJ Institute of Oncology at Hyderabad, Pallium India, American Cancer Society and the International Network for Cancer Treatment and Research (INCTR) joined hands to develop a palliative care training center at Hyderabad in the state of Andhra Pradesh. All the collaborators are very proud of this hugely successful venture. The Center has now announced their one month certificate course for doctors and nurses. For details, please email [mnj.palliative@gmail.com](mailto:mnj.palliative@gmail.com)

And the certificate course at Trivandrum:

The six weeks' certificate courses for doctors and nurses continue at Trivandrum. Ordinarily they start on the first Monday of alternate months. The September course is full, but if any one would like to apply for the subsequent courses, please visit <http://www.palliumindia.org/courses.htm>. And please note: the January course in 2010 will not start on the first Monday of the month, but is scheduled to start on 18 January.

World Hospice and Palliative Care Day – 10 Oct 2009:

If not already done, it is time to start planning now. The World Hospice and Palliative Care Day falls on the second Saturday of October 2009. As part of the activities, all over the world, palliative care enthusiasts will sing for palliative care (The Voices for Hospices program), the objectives being awareness and fund-raising. This year's theme is "Discover your voice". To know more about it and to register your event, please visit <http://www.worldday.org/>

Happy Onam!

To all Keralites, we wish a happy Onam. (A word of explanation to the non-Keralites: Onam is the harvest festival of the state of Kerala – a time of great festivities and joy.) This year it falls on the first few days of September. Best wishes to all of you for this festive season.

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