



Reaching Out to them
... Together
E-Newsletter

PALLIUM INDIA
CARE BEYOND CURE

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Dear friends

We have a lot of poverty in India; true. But we have some things to be thankful for, too. The strong family structure, for one thing. Most patients enjoy the privilege of having a family clustering around, willing to help.

Most, but not all. Unfortunately there are exceptions, and for them, life is not easy.

What should the palliative care team do when a man with advanced cancer has been thrown out of his own home by his offspring and is left to fend for himself in the back veranda of a distant relative's house? What can we do, when a young woman with advanced cancer (and in debt) is harassed by her husband who wants her to sign divorce papers now, but does not want to part with the dowry that he had happily taken at the time of the marriage? Can the palliative care team afford to get into the legal tangles? If we don't, are we not deserting these people who need our help most?

These are not hypothetical questions. This is about two real people. We raise these questions not just to share the distress. We hope some of you will think about this and share your thoughts with us, so that we can get closer to an answer.

Refresher course: 30-31 May 2009.

The above would be one of several issues of practical importance that we will discuss at the Refresher course in Palliative Care at Trivandrum on 30-31 May 2009. Apart from the faculty

members in Trivandrum, we also hope to have with us Dr Peter Kirk and Dr Fraser Black from Canada, Ms Connie Leslie from San Diego, Dr Reena M George from Vellore and Dr Mallika Tiruvadanan from Chennai.

The program on 30th of May will focus on symptom control and is meant for doctors. We hope to discuss psycho-social issues on the next day. The emphasis will be on discussing issues that palliative care practitioners face in their day to day practice. Those who wish to register for the program please contact pallium.india@gmail.com or call 0471 244 0306. You can download the application form from http://www.palliumindia.org/course_refreshermay2009.htm

Lance Armstrong foundation announces global cancer campaign:

At the age of 25, Lance Armstrong won two world championships in cycle racing. Then in 1996 he found out that he had testicular cancer. "I even coughed up blood once", he says.

He went through his treatment and as a source of inspiration for people associated with cancer the world over, is back in the world of competitive cycling! The organization he founded, the Lance Armstrong Foundation is dedicated to turning cancer *patients* to cancer *survivors!* (The foundation has been a support to us in the past. They provided us with funds to take forward the EPEC-India program. Thank you Lance Armstrong and all at the foundation!)

This year, the foundation launches the "Livestrong Global Cancer Campaign". They want to partner with organizations anywhere in the world to fight cancer and its problems including pain. Their global commitment document announces three major goals of the campaign:

1. Together we will end the stigma of cancer and turn cancer victims into cancer survivors.
2. Together we will build an international grassroots movement that will take cancer from isolation to collaboration.
3. Together with world leaders, we will transform cancer from obscurity to priority.

The foundation invites organizations around the world to submit "innovative commitments" before 15 May 2009. 250 organizations around the world will be invited to attend a Global Cancer Summit at Dublin in August 2009. To know more about the program, please watch their Global

commitment video at youTube

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ey92B55PYZk&feature=channel> or visit www.livestrong.org.

A precious letter.

An envelope came by post to Pallium India recently. It contained some crackling currency notes and an anonymous letter. Let us share the contents with you.

Dear Pallium India,

I congratulate you for the valuable service that you are rendering to people suffering from pain. I am happy to join hands in your great effort. I have lost to cancer some people dear to me and so I have a special interest in the matter.

I am a student of Sarvodaya School in Trivandrum. You had come to our school and conducted a class and discussion on palliative care. From that day, I consider myself part of your movement. I send to you all the money that I have, Rs.700.....

The letter goes on to promise support for the future.

We would like our dear friend, a school-going donor, to know that this contribution is unique. You have given us **all** the money that you have. A hundred things would tempt someone of your age – a new *churidar*, a treat to your friends, some new trinket to match your dress! What iron discipline would enable an Indian schoolgirl to resist them all and to put together Rs. 700 and to send it **all**!

Truly, as Alan Paton would say, “God put your hands on you”! Thank you!

Palliative Care in Cancer Centers: Pallium India project:

Development of palliative care in India has largely eluded major hospitals. Even today, there are regional cancer centers with no palliative care program. In the April issue of this newsletter, we reported the Pallium India-PPSG projects in cancer centers in Aizawl (Mizoram) and in Imphal (Manipur).

Thanks to the support from United States Cancer Pain Relief Committee, Pallium India and PPSG are now able to expand the program to reach UP, Bihar and Jhharkand. We are happy to

report that the team from Meharbai Tata Memorial Cancer Hospital in Jamshedpur – Dr Urmila and nurse Sunitha - have finished a six weeks' certificate course in Palliative Care at Trivandrum Institute of Palliative Sciences (TIPS) and are just getting ready to get going. And Dr Sanjay Dhiraj, an Associate Professor from Sanjay Gandhi Institute in Lucknow has started on his training this month. Good luck, Sunitha, Urmila and Sanjay! You have a noble and vital mission on your hands. We are with you!

More good news from the North-east:

Dr Ravikannan, an onco-surgeon who migrated from Chennai to Assam, is trying his best to get a palliative care program going in Cachar Cancer Center, Silchar, Assam. He found a committed duo – Dr Iqbal Bahar and Mr Govind to undergo six weeks' certificate course in TIPS, with support from Indo-American Cancer Association. The team has completed their training and returned home.

The pioneer of palliative care in Assam is Dr Dinesh Goswami who founded a palliative care program at Guahati about 15 years back and went on expanding it to cover more ground. This new workforce in Silchar, we are sure, would add strength to the work of the pioneers. Best wishes, Ravi, Iqbal and Govind!

New pain problems:

TIPS is located near a vital electronic hub called “Technopark” in Trivandrum and so we are particularly concerned about a pain problem coming up - Trigger Finger - Repetitive Strain Finger Pain – caused by incessant Mouse and keyboard use. It is a swelling of the tendon or tendon sheath in the palm of the hand of the tendons that bend the fingers and most commonly affects the ring and middle finger. It may cause:

- A locking or catching sensation in the finger while making a fist, often painful.
- The finger may "lock" into a bent position.
- Possibly, joint stiffness and pain in the affected finger.

The most effective treatment of course, is to change the profession; but that sort of advice seldom helps, does it? Training oneself to keep fingers relaxed over the keyboard will help. Minimizing repetitive movements and periodic rest should help too. Use of ergonomic mouse is

supposed to be useful too.

Is breast self-examination as accurate as mammography?

An interesting study presented by Lee Gravatt Wilke and colleagues at the American Society of Breast Surgeons' 10th Annual Meeting in San Diego, California reports as Breast self-examination (BSE) is **as accurate as** mammography and magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) at detecting new breast cancers in high-risk women

We can almost hear angry responses from enthusiasts of mammography and MRI questioning the validity of the findings of this study, but wait a minute! Can we at least agree that BSE **is** effective? Well, if it is, why is there no effective program in our country to teach BSE to women?

Early bird registration at Trichy: date extended:

Dr T Mohansundaram, the organizing secretary of the Trichy palliative care conference (11-14 February 2010), reports that the deadline for early bird registrations has been extended till the end of May 2009. For details please email mohan.sudharsana@gmail.com or trichypalcon2010@gmail.com.

For details, please visit <http://www.palcontrichy.com>

Best wishes from all of us at Pallium India

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