



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

**PALLIUM INDIA**  
CARE BEYOND CURE

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Dear Friend

The palliative care scene in India has a close association with the city of Madison, Wisconsin. The city is home to Pain and Policy Studies Group (PPSG), a WHO collaborating Center at Madison University. Its founder David Joranson and his team have done a lot for us. They analyzed the narcotic regulations of India, found funds, and worked with us to make easier access to pain relief medication like oral morphine. This collaboration succeeded in getting narcotic regulations simplified in 13 states in India.

Recently PPSG started an international fellowship program to train doctors and drug regulators in improving access to opioids. The last of these workshops was held at Madison last month. Two of the participants were from Nepal – Dr Vishnu, an oncologist, and Mr Radharaman, drugs controller of the country. There were participants also from Armenia, Georgia, Jamaica, Guatemala, Kenya and Moldova.

Most of them came out with the same problems – complicated drug regulations, lack of awareness among doctors and so on. But our friends from Nepal said that their biggest problem lay in India. They had to depend on India for their supply of morphine and there were always interruptions in supply. What was worse, they could not ordinarily get responses for their communications.

When we go deeper into this, we find that this was a common problem in India too till 1998. Collaborative work between PPSG and Indian palliative care community resulted in government action. And, there were no interruptions in supply between 1998 and 2005. But the problem is

coming up again. We have promised the Nepali friends that we shall try our best to overcome this problem.

### **Online Opioid Course**

The Pain & Policy Studies Group, Madison-Wisconsin, is running an online course on opioid availability. The objective is to increase patient access to pain medicines around the World.

This course is about the relationship between government policies that affect the medical availability of opioid analgesics and patients who experience moderate to severe pain. It is critically important for health care professionals, government drug regulators, and advocates involved in palliative care and pain relief to understand the government policies that control opioid analgesics and how they can block or ensure patient access to opioid analgesics.

It was designed to provide a synthesis of the critical background material and current methods that have been developed to improve national policies governing medical availability of essential pain medicines for cancer and HIV/AIDS patients. The course includes examples of improvements in opioid availability in many countries: China, Colombia, India, Italy, Mexico, Philippines, Romania, Serbia, Uganda, Vietnam, Zambia and others. It is intended for an international audience of health care professionals, local and national policy makers, palliative care advocates, government drug regulatory personnel, national health policy advisors, and health policy scholars with an interest in pain management or palliative care.

The course is accessible at no cost and is self-paced so that it can be taken at any time convenient to the learner. It has 7 lessons each with required readings. Upon successful completion of the course the learner will receive a certificate. Visit: [http://www.painpolicy.wisc.edu/on-line\\_course/welcome.htm](http://www.painpolicy.wisc.edu/on-line_course/welcome.htm)

### **Working together in Malaysia**

Pallium India had the privilege of being part of two events in June in Penang in Malaysia – the Annual Conference of Malaysian Hospice Council and a workshop on pain for doctors. The chief organizer was Dato Seri Dr Devaraj. (“Dato Seri” is a title awarded by the Royal Ruler of the country). Pallium India was given the task of planning and conducting the pain workshop with

the support of other faculty members including Dr David Brumley from Australia and Dr. Devaraj, Dr Lalitha Kanny and Dr Mary Cardosa from Malaysia.

Is Malaysia a developing country or a developed country? Perhaps it is a bit of both. At least as far as pain management was concerned, the picture seemed to have many similarities with India – fear of morphine, regulatory obstacles, inappropriate availability and use of needlessly expensive medication even as cheap and simple drugs remained unavailable. Like in India, palliative care delivery is still mostly the task of Non-Government Organizations. But they are well ahead of India in that the government has included palliative care service in most government hospitals.

Let us end this Malaysian note with a mention of Dr Richard Lim Boon Leong. He came first to India more than 10 years back when he was a medical student in Malaysia. Since then he became an oncologist and is now the head of the Malaysian government's palliative care program. He has already succeeded in including palliative care in medical education.

### **Congrats, Dr Jenifer!**

Dr Jenifer Jeba Sunderraj, radiation oncologist and palliative care physician of CMC Vellore, has won Diploma in Palliative Medicine from Cardiff University with distinction. She has been awarded, with another student, **Dame Cicely Saunders Medal**, for topping the class. Dr Jenifer has taken up palliative care as a full-time career.

### **Pain-killers free**

If you are a palliative care centre in India, and if you want ibuprofen (400 mg) free, there is someone who will give it: Dr Purvish Parikh of Mumbai. Dr Parikh is the managing director of the India Office of an NGO, Americares. The drug has an expiry date of January 2009. Anyone who likes to have the painkiller, let us at [pallium.india@gmail.com](mailto:pallium.india@gmail.com) know how much you will be able to use by January.

### **IAPC Annual Conference 2009**

The conference is being held in New Delhi in February 2009. Dr Sushma Bhatnagar, organising secretary, writes:

“On behalf of the Organising Committee of IAPCON 2009, it is my proud privilege to welcome you all to join the 16th International Conference of Indian Association of Palliative Care (IAPC) which is scheduled to be held from 13th–15th February, 2009 at Jawaharlal Nehru Auditorium, All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), New Delhi, India. The objective of the conference is to “Update Knowledge in Palliative Care” and the theme of the conference is "Freedom from Pain". .....As interventional pain management is fast evolving into a subspecialty of pain medicine, we are organising one day pre-conference hands-on Cadaveric Workshop in Interventional Pain Management techniques on 12th February, 2009. World renowned National and International experts will conduct this workshop.... For details visit: [www.iapcon2009.org](http://www.iapcon2009.org)

Kindly note the following dates.

1. Last date of registration for Cadeveric Workshop 31<sup>st</sup> July, 2008. (Limited for 100 participants only. First fifty will be able to get hands-on experience in dissection hall; next 50 will be able to see by audio visual recording.)
2. Last date for early bird Registration 31<sup>st</sup> August, 2008
3. Last date for Abstract submission: 30<sup>th</sup> September, 2008.”

The address is: Dr. Sushma Bhatnagar, Organizing Secretary, IAPCON-2009 R.NO. 242, Institute Rotary Cancer Hospital, All India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi, Phone- 09811326453, 09811518929, [Email- iapcon2009@gmail.com](mailto:iapcon2009@gmail.com) and [shumob@yahoo.com](mailto:shumob@yahoo.com)

### **Pain and Chemical Dependency**

The International Association of Pain and Chemical Dependency is holding its annual conference at Philadelphia from October 29 to November 1, 2009. Anyone interested in the interface between pain management and substance dependence may visit [www.iapcd.org](http://www.iapcd.org).

### **Death and Laughter**

As palliative care-givers, we often find death balking at us, teasing, terrorizing. It can shake the strongest as it did Susan Sontag. The irrepressible American thinker saw death as a “cosmic

insult.” Her son, David Rieff, has come out with a significant book on how she faced the terminal diagnosis, ***Swimming in a Sea of Death: a Son's Memoir***. He dwells at length, and engagingly so, on his distinguished mother’s “complete inability to reconcile herself to the fact of mortality.” She was, as he puts it, “unreconciled to her own extinction.”

There were others like that archetypal student of Indian philosophical lore, Nachiketa, who wouldn’t let death make a single move without answering his elemental questions, before revealing the ultimate wisdom on life and death. Death did not scare him.

Like Nachiketa, Zeuxis was not scared of death, but unlike the Indian student, the Greek painter was not quite curious. He was rather amused. So much so that Zeuxis literally laughed to death, watching his own work, which was purported to be a picture of Aphrodite modeled on a haggard woman.

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