

Declaration by the People of Kerala

Under the auspices of

Freemasons Club of Trivandrum

and

Rotary Club of Trivandrum

In collaboration with

Pallium India,

Indian Medical Association, Kerala,

Indian Association of Palliative Care, Kerala

and the Indian Society of Anaesthetists, Kerala

We, the people of Kerala,

recognizing that, in the presence of many life limiting diseases, including cancer and HIV, uncontrolled pain and symptoms can be excruciating for patients and families;

noting that people who have not experienced uncontrolled pain cannot imagine how bad it can be;

recognizing that unrelieved pain and symptoms cause tens of thousands of patients and families in Kerala enormous physical, psychological and social suffering, including debt slavery;^{1 2}

taking note that morphine is an “essential medicine” included in the Government of India’s and the World Health Organization's, “Model List” because it is indispensable for pain relief in a majority of situations;

¹ One in Five suicides in India is due to chronic illness:

<http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/healthcare/biotech/healthcare/one-in-5-suicides-in-india-is-due-to-chronic-illness/articleshow/45043369.cms>

² Parents kill ailing son before committing suicide in hospital

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kozhikode/Parents-kill-ailing-son-before-committing-suicide-in-hospital/articleshow/35912324.cms>

Also noting that essential medicines must be “available, accessible, and affordable” according to WHO criteria;

But noting that morphine, although manufactured in India and inexpensive, is *not available or accessible in the majority of hospitals and pharmacies* either in the state of Kerala or in the country as a whole;

recognizing that the majority of medical colleges in India fail to teach modern pain management;

Also recognising that India is party to several human rights treaties, including the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights which supports the right to palliative care and pain management;

Noting that end of life care in hospitals is often inadequate and inhumane, that patients’ symptoms are usually unrelieved and that they are burdened with invasive, expensive and inappropriately aggressive end of life care, further traumatising family members and loved ones;

Demand that the Government of Kerala direct

- all hospitals in the state to stock and dispense morphine, the affordable “essential medicine” upon presentation of a correct prescription;
- all hospitals to have at least one doctor and nurse trained in pain management and palliative care on staff;
- hospitals in Kerala to develop appropriate end of life care policies that respect the dignity of the individual, relieve suffering whenever possible, and facilitate end of life care in the presence of the family avoiding inappropriate and expensive interventions; and further direct
- public health and community organisations to provide professional and volunteer training in crucial conversations on topics such as end of life care, disposition of assets, living wills, and the right to refuse artificial life-support measures in the face of clinical opinion that cure is no longer an option, and further treatment futile.