

Palliative Care

A healthcare approach that focuses on relieving and preventing the suffering of patients. It improves quality of life by addressing physical, emotional, spiritual, and social concerns that arise with advanced illness. While skillful prescription of drugs, like morphine, eases physical symptoms such as pain, nausea and breathlessness, an interdisciplinary team of social workers and counsellors form a support system to help patients and their families cope with issues like fear, loss and grief. The World Health Organisation calls for a three-pronged approach to advance palliative care: availability of essential medicines, education of healthcare professionals and the public, as well as policy change that integrates palliative care into national health strategies.

State of Things

Ranked 1st in Asia for its quality of end-of-life care according to a global Quality of Death index by the Economist Intelligence Unit.

Multi-religious foundations are major influences that encourage the acceptance of palliative care among the public, largely through outreach activities, volunteers and celebrities.

Palliative care started as a grassroots movement in the 1980s and is now widely offered in hospitals, hospices and homes.

A national palliative care strategy is in the works to promote awareness of death, dying and standards of care.

Palliative care is now a specialty subject offered in medical education, from undergraduate studies to specialist training.

In 12 years, Mongolia became one of 35 countries in the world where palliative care is integrated into national health policies and laws.

All medical schools offer education and specialised training on palliative care.

It is used as a model in neighbouring countries like Kyrgyzstan, which wants to develop a palliative care system.

Rapid early progress since 2005, including national guidelines on palliative care and radically improved opioid prescribing regulations based on international standards.

Heavily dependent on international aid and lack of national long-term strategy.

No state-provided palliative care services or specialty courses for healthcare workers.

Less than 80 beds across the country available for palliative care.

A national palliative care association is in the works to train caregivers and provide palliative care.

Why Palliative Care is Needed Urgently

>20%

By 2025, Taiwan's elderly will make up more than 20% of population. Almost all of them will face at least one kind of chronic disorder.

↑32%

One of the fastest-ageing populations in the world, where one out of five people will older than 65 years old in 2030.

The number of people who will die from cancer is expected to rise by about 32% over the next decade.

6^x

Mongolia has the highest rate of liver cancer mortality – six times the global average – in the world. High rates of Hepatitis C and B infection are aggravated by prevalent alcohol use.

100

Studies reveal very high prevalence of unrelieved suffering among patients with cancer, and chronic illnesses.

Vietnam is battling an AIDS epidemic, with 100 people newly affected every day. Drug users account for up to 65% of them.

8 in 10

Financial and social issues usually hinder the road to treatment for cancer patients, where 8 in 10 of them are diagnosed in the late incurable stage.

Hospitals are usually overloaded with patients and will not admit dying patients.

Human Development Index (as of 2011)*

Taiwan

23.3 million 

22 of 187 countries

Taiwan is not a member of the U.N., but it would rank 22 of 187 if compared against other nations.

Singapore

5.2 million 

26 of 187 countries

Mongolia

2.8 million 

101 of 187 countries

Vietnam

87.8 million 

128 of 187 countries

Bangladesh

150 million 

146 of 187 countries

On After Cicely

At the beginning of the film, Sister Geraldine recounted some visions of dying that her patients shared with her.

- Is death your greatest fear? *Why?*
- Do the women in the film remind you of someone you know? *Who? Why?*
- What motivates them to do what they do?
- What are the five words to describe your feelings after watching the film?
- Have the women inspired you? *Why?*

On a Caregiver's Role

- Have you ever cared for someone who was very sick or dying? *How was it like?*
- What challenges did you face as a caregiver?
- Who supported you through the journey?
- What have you learnt from the experience of caring?
- What was your experience with the healthcare system and staff?
- How can the experience be improved?

On Why You Do What You Do

For healthcare workers:

- Why did you choose to work in healthcare?
- Did the job match your expectations? *Why?*
- What are the biggest challenges of the job?
Please elaborate.
- How would you improve your work experience?
- What have you learnt from your patients?
- What do you love about your job?