

Telephonic Communication in Palliative Care for Better Management of Terminal Cancer Patients in Rural India: An NGO Based Approach

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Abstract : Aim: Due to financial incapability and the absence of manpower-poor families often fail to carry their advanced cancer patients to the nodal centers. This pilot study will explore whether communication by mobile phone can lessen this burden. Method: Initially a plan was generated regarding management of an advanced cancer patient in a nodal center at District Head Quarter. Subsequently every two week a trained social worker attached to the nodal center will follow up and give necessary advice and emotional support to the patients and their families through their registered mobile phone number. Patient's family were also encouraged to communicate with the team by phone in case of fresh complain and urgency in between. Results: Since initiation in January 2013, 193 cancer patients were contacted by mobile phone every two weeks to enquire about their difficulties. In 76% of the situation trained social workers could give necessary advice by phone regarding management of their physical symptoms. Moreover, patient's family was really overwhelmed by the emotional support offered by the team over the phone. Only 24% of cancer patients have to attend the nodal center for expert advice from Palliative Care specialists. Conclusion: This novel approach helped: (a) In providing regular physical and emotional support to the patients and their families. (b) In significantly reducing the financial and manpower problems of carrying patients to the nodal units. (c) In improving the quality of life of patients by continuous guidance. More and more team members can take help of this new strategy for better communication and uninterrupted care.

Keywords : palliative care, terminal care, home based palliative care, rural india

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