

Difficulties in Providing Palliative Care in Rural India, West Bengal: Experience of an NGO

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Abstract : Introduction: As in any developing countries state of West Bengal in India has a huge burden of cancer patients in advanced stage coming from rural area where awareness regarding the usefulness of palliative care is rather poor. Objective: Our goal is to give a pain free good quality of life in these advanced stage cancer patients. Objective of this study is to identify the main difficulties in achieving the above goal in a rural village setting in India. Method: Advanced cancer patients in need of palliative care in various villages in of rural India were selected for this study. Their symptoms and managements in that rural surroundings were evaluated by an NGO (under the guidance of a senior palliative care specialist) working in that area. An attempt was made to identify the main obstacles in getting proper palliative care in a rural setting. Results: Pain, fatigue are the main symptoms effecting these patients. In most patients pain and other symptoms control were grossly inadequate due to lack of properly trained manpower in the rural India. However regular homecare visits by a group of social workers were of immense help in the last few months of life. NGO team was well guided by a palliative care specialist. Conclusion: There is a wide gap of trained manpower in this filled in rural areas of India. Dedicated groups from rural area itself need encouragement and proper training, so that difficult symptoms can be managed locally along with necessary social and psychological support to these patients.

Keywords : palliative care, NGO, rural India, home care

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