
WHO/WPCA Global Atlas of Palliative Care



The World Health Organization and the Worldwide Palliative Care Alliance today published the [Global Atlas of Palliative Care at the End of Life](#) [1]. The Atlas is the first document to identify the need for and availability of palliative care globally.

Annually, it is estimated that over 20 million patients need palliative care at the end of life. This number rises to at least 40 million when we include those that could benefit from palliative care earlier in their care, including children, who make up 6% of this figure. As hospice and palliative care always includes care for multiple family members, the actual need is well over 100 million people each year.

At present approximately 3 million patients received palliative care in 2011, meaning that less than 10% of the need is currently being met. According to the Atlas, most palliative care is provided in high-income countries while almost 80% of the global need for palliative care is in low and middle-income countries.

Palliative care is whole person care for patients and families that have serious advanced illnesses provided by teams of professionals and community volunteers. About one third of those needing palliative care suffer from cancer, but most have non-cancer progressive illnesses like heart, lung, liver, kidney, brain, and other chronic and life threatening illnesses including HIV and drug resistant tuberculosis.

Only about 16,000 teams worldwide, most in developed countries, provide specialised palliative care. Just 20 countries (8%) have palliative care well integrated into their healthcare systems. The barriers to palliative care include:

- lack of policies recognizing palliative care
- lack of access to essential medicines especially pain relievers
- lack of education for health care professionals and the public about the benefits of palliative care
- lack of resources for the implementation of services.

“The Global Atlas of Palliative Care at the End of Life is an excellent tool to advocate for the inclusion of palliative in the global, regional and national health agendas,” Said Dr Oleg Chestnov, WHO Assistant Director General for non-communicable diseases & mental health.

The Atlas calls on countries to include palliative care as an essential component to every modern health care system. Governments must address barriers to palliative care provision so that the millions of adults and children with advanced illness that are enduring unnecessary pain and suffering each year can receive the care they need.

“What is also needed is for the global community to work together to help prevent early mortality from communicable and non-communicable diseases. Palliative care, while vital at the end of life, also has a key role to play in this

prevention.” Added David Prall, Co-Chair of the WPCA.

The Atlas can be downloaded from www.thewpca.org/resources [2]

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