

INTERVIEW

PALLIATIVE CARE IN TURKEY

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What is the current state of Palliative Care in Turkey?

The need for palliative care has never been greater and is increasing rapidly because the Turkey's aging population and the increasing incidence of cancer. In parallel with the increasing need for cancer patients in Turkey, the Turkish Ministry of Health launched a national cancer control program for the next 5 years in 2009. The program includes five main headings: Registry, Prevention, Screening and Early Diagnosis, Treatment and finally Palliative Care. Among these, palliative care was the weakest part of current cancer control activities in Turkey. Therefore, the Turkish Ministry of Health, Cancer Control Department launched the nurse and society-based The Pallia-Turk Project in 2010.







With the start of The Pallia-Turk, Turkey has worked to educate medical and auxiliary professionals (oncology nurses, oncologists, pain experts, anesthesiologists, internal medicine specialists, pediatricians, pathologists, social workers, psychologists, art therapists, and spiritual counselors) and regulators to overcome the perceptual, cultural, and financial obstacles that many clinicians (mainly family physicians, general practitioners, and nurses in the community) face in their effort to promote basic issues of cancer awareness, palliative care, and pain control. The Cancer Control Department is in close collaboration with some professional national (Turkish Society of Palliative Care, Turkish Society of Medical Oncology and Oncology Nursing Association of Turkey) and international [Middle East Cancer Consortium (MECC), World Health Organization Institut Català d'Oncologia (WHO ICO) Center, San Diego Hospice, American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO), Union for International Cancer Control (UICC)] societies to implement nationwide training modules to nurses, physicians and other professionals.

What role does nursing play?

Nurses play the most important role and bear the most important responsibilities in the Pallia-Turk Project. Nurses are in contact with patients at all stage of cancer, during treatment, and care setting and they are more proactive and innovative in the care efforts intent to maximize quality of life of cancer patients and their families. Palliative care nurses have a unique and primary responsibility for advocating for the right of patients to maintain their quality of life for as long as possible and to experience a dignified and peaceful death.

Palliative care seems to be an area of focus in Turkey. What changes are expected?

Palliative Care Units have been established in university hospitals, hospitals administered by Public Hospitals Authority of Turkey, and private hospitals. Based on the 2015 data provided by the Turkish Ministry of Health, there exist 87 palliative care units endorsed by the Turkish Ministry of Health.









The palliative care team consists doctors, nurses, physiotherapist, dietitian, social worker and psychologist. Primarily nurses, doctors, and other healthcare professionals who received palliative care education are assigned to these units.

Also we applied to the Turkish Ministry of Health to obtain permission to create a program involving theoretical instruction as well as clinical training entitled “Palliative Care Nursing Certificate Program”, with an aim to embellish the palliative care nurses with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required by their profession, and the Ministry of Health approved this application. Now, we are working in collaboration with the Ministry of Health for this Certificate Program. Via this certification program, all palliative care nurses in 81 provinces of Turkey are aimed to be covered and authorised about palliative care.

There are a lot of palliative care services courses, we have to assess the effectiveness of the palliative care services courses. Partnership with community-based organizations that work with the palliative care patients should be established. We will have palliative care guidelines should be created based on the cultural structure of our country. The palliative care concept will be integrated in the curriculum of all nursing and the other health care professionals’ schools.

Tell us about your program. What is the current education of nurses in Palliative Care and what are your plans for the future?

The nurses in Turkey have either graduated from nursing high schools or nursing departments of universities. Clinical nursing education is carried out by faculty members of nursing schools after completion of or in conjunction with theoretical courses. Most oncology nurses gain experience while working in oncology clinics, from more experienced nurses, and the oncologist, and some of them are certified by attending postgraduate courses for oncology nurses.
Lack of palliative care education and training opportunities is the most frequently reported barrier to the development of palliative care in Turkey. Palliative care is general has not been yet integrated into the curriculum of nursing at both undergraduate and postgraduate level. There is little palliative care education for undergraduate and postgraduate nursing students in some nursing schools. Nurses acquire his/her palliative care knowledge and skills after graduation, from programs with different formats: workshops, seminars, and courses.
Several seminars and workshops have been organized in cooperation with national (Turkish Society of Palliative Care, Turkish Society of Medical Oncology and Oncology Nursing Association of Turkey) and international [Middle East Cancer Consortium (MECC), World Health Organization, Oncology Nursing Society, European Oncology Nursing Society] organizations for nurses.
In the future, this national and international seminars and workshops will be continuing increasingly and it is planned the establishment of partnerships and networks. Studies have been initiated to strengthen palliative care throughout the country and sustaining of these studies are planned.

You have visited many countries. What are some of the unique aspects and challenges you face in Turkey?

Palliative care is developing in Turkey which is among developing countries. The Turkish Ministry of Health launched a national home-based palliative care program in 2010 and palliative care services are continued in home with interprofessional home care team. However, it is necessary to increase the awareness of health professionals about home-based palliative care.
Perinatal palliative care has begun to study in our country. Our studies are progress in perinatal palliative care to support parents and to provide of care they deserve.

What keeps you motivated and what advice can you give to younger leaders?

In order to ensure sustained initiated these programs by young leaders, I think they should get involved in training, research and projects. Leaders should be provided to benefit national and international training opportunities of younger leaders. In this way, empowerment of they in palliative care will be provided. The young leaders especially who gained experience in the international arena, will contribute to the development of palliative care in our country.

Any additional comments?

Via participation in Palliative Care Network , we want participate in international conferences and want to get involved in projects that compare palliative care developments among countries.

About PROFESSOR FUSUN TERZIOGLU

Professor Terzioglu has received distinguished awards and scholarships including: İhsan Dogramacı Superior Merit Award and Student Science Incentive Award and the International Research Scholarship which was supported by International Network for Doctoral Education in Nursing (INDEN) and Sigma Theta Tau and has experience worldwide at the following institutions: Hacettepe University School of Nursing (Turkey), Liverpool Women's Hospital Reproductive Medicine Unit in (United Kingdom), Kaplan School of Nursing and Hebrew University (Israel) , Kent State University College of Nursing (USA), and University of Michigan Faculty of Nursing (USA).

She is currently the Chair of Obstetric and Gynecologic Nursing Department and worked as the Director of Nursing Services at Hacettepe University Hospitals, Board and Quality Commission member of Hacettepe University Hospitals between 2012-2015 and Founding Dean of Faculty of Nursing between 2012- 2013. She has published over 80 papers, 15 grant projects, 14 books as an editor and author, and delivered more than 100 presentations at national and international congresses.

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Palliative Care Network (PCN) provides an online, educational platform for palliative care professionals. Registration on the website and access to materials remains free of charge allowing palliative care professionals from all fields to remain abreast of palliative care trends. Expert interviews, lectures, presentations, posters, etc. are voluntarily shared on the PCN Community.

VISIT: www.palliativecarenetwork.com to download materials.