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Integrating palliative care in the public health care system in Kenya

Zipporah Ali

Kenya Hospices and Palliative Care Association, Kenya

Palliative care should not be seen as a luxury, but as a necessary essential service; it should not be only for the few who can afford it but for those living in better socio-economic conditions. Kenya Hospices and Palliative Care Association (KEHPCA) works together with its stakeholders such as the Ministry of Health (government hospitals), mission hospitals, hospices, community-based organizations and training institutions to ensure that there is greater access across the county, thus scaling up palliative care services for all in Kenya to bridge the very significant gap between those who receive services and those in need. This encompasses addressing issues of accessibility, affordability, quality and patients' rights. KEHPCA advocates for the integration of palliative care for children, adults and the older people into all levels of health services in Kenya as a basic human right. KEHPCA has recognized the pain and suffering of many patients and families in Kenya who have no access to cure (where cure is possible), cannot afford treatment for cancer or other progressive chronic illnesses, are stigmatized or discriminated against because of their illness among many other dehumanizing issues. Therefore, KEHPCA exists to advocate for palliative care for such people; to be the voice for the voiceless. While the first hospice in Kenya was started over 24 years ago, palliative care remained an isolated service, available to only a few in the major cities where there was a hospice. Up until 2007, when KEHPCA started fully functioning, there were just a few hospices in Kenya. KEHPCA is living up to its vision of ensuring that this service is accessible and affordable across the country, at all levels of care. By integrating these services into public hospitals, costs for patients in terms of travel, time and service are greatly reduced. This presentation will focus on sharing service delivery models suitable for lower middle-income countries.

zippy@kehpc.org