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Short Communication

Advancing the Role of Higher Education Institutions to Support Palliative Care Education in Primary Care and Humanitarian Settings within Low- and Middle-Income Countries: Online Workshop Report

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ABSTRACT

The need for palliative care is increasing, especially in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). Higher education institutions (HEIs) have a role to play in developing a skilled palliative care workforce in LMICs. A workshop was held to discuss this issue, and it was attended by experts from around the world. The workshop highlighted the challenges and opportunities for palliative care education in HEIs for LMIC settings. The participants discussed the importance of a collaborative interprofessional approach and advocacy for the inclusion of palliative care into a wide range of curricula. They also expressed the hope to explore possibilities of networks to continue this discussion and incorporate the wider perspectives from primary care and humanitarian practitioners.

Keywords: Palliative care, Higher education institution, Primary care, Humanitarian setting, Low- and middle-income countries

INTRODUCTION

The worldwide need for a workforce with palliative care skills will rise with increased global awareness of palliative care needs, especially in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) where there is a shortage of services, skilled professionals and relevant education opportunities. Globally, there are two large areas where the demand for palliative care is exceeding the supply of such care – these are in primary care and humanitarian settings. This workshop sought to examine the important role that higher education institutions (HEIs) in all countries have in developing a high-quality palliative care workforce.

The workshop explored the HEI role in palliative care education in relation to establishing or improving primary palliative care and palliative care in humanitarian settings in LMICs. The workshop comprised international experts from the World Health Organisation, International Children's Palliative Care Network, universities and organisations representing Bangladesh, Uganda,

Gaza, India, and UK. Participants attended from high-, middle- and lower-income countries, representing universities, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and clinical workplaces.

KEY THEMES FROM DISCUSSION

Accessibility to palliative care education in LMICs for all professions

This was summarised under the themes of affordability, availability of appropriate opportunities and the potential of technology to increase access.

1. Affordability: University-accredited programmes may limit accessibility due to high costs, thereby reducing wider participation. Further, discussion regarding opportunities for increased funding is warranted to address these affordability issues
2. Availability of palliative care education at different levels; ranging from continuing professional development, short courses, undergraduate, diploma, and

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postgraduate. Continuing development of these options may enhance accessibility for participants who might not meet traditional entry requirements. Furthermore, we considered the optimisation of digital technology for innovative education delivery methods, enabling greater teaching collaboration and expanding access to practitioners in remote and fragile areas in LMICs.

Collaboration

We discussed examples of collaboration between HEIs in high-income countries and LMICs, between HEIs in LMICs, and between stakeholders (i.e., government, palliative care provider, and NGOs) and HEIs. Shared benefits of collaboration included (1) creating local or national champions of palliative care who had the credibility from gaining a higher degree from an HEI; (2) ensuring quality education and standardised curricula; (3) supporting knowledge sharing through research and resource dissemination and (4) providing funds to develop courses and grants. Collaborations could be established as partnerships to ensure continuous and formal support.

The interprofessional nature of palliative care education

The importance of interprofessional involvement, both as faculty and participant, was emphasised, with a focus on ensuring the incorporation of groups who may have been previously under-represented; especially nurses, Allied Health Professionals and community workers. This highlighted issues of equality, inclusion and empowerment.

Recommendations

This workshop considered some of the challenges and opportunities for palliative care education in HEI for LMIC settings. While recognising that this is an evolving area, two overarching themes emerged: the utilisation of a collaborative interprofessional approach and advocacy for the inclusion of palliative care into a wide range of curricula.

Therefore, we hope to explore possibilities of networks to continue this discussion, specifically to incorporate the wider perspectives from primary care and humanitarian

Learning in relation to HEIs and delivery of palliative care in humanitarian settings

- Need for collaboration and partnerships across HEI's and a sharing from humanitarian settings of what is needed
- Consider flexible learning opportunities and career development focused on palliative care
- Facilitate a range of levels of education – from short courses to specialist level
- Encourage multi-professional participation, involvement, and empowerment

Learning in relation to HEIs and delivery of palliative care in primary care settings

- Collaboration between HEIs and stakeholders to increase accessibility for primary care practitioners, including who works in government sector.
- Interprofessional approach in palliative care education for primary care practitioners
- Investing in the opportunities for new fusion types of learning

practitioners with the ultimate aim of supporting the ongoing development of patient care.

Declaration of patient consent

The authors certify that they have obtained all appropriate patient consent.

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Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts of interest.

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