**National Consensus Project for Quality Palliative Care**

**Clinical Practice Guidelines – Fourth Edition**

Palliative care focuses on expert assessment and management of pain and other symptoms, assessment and support of caregiver needs and coordination of care. Palliative care attends to the physical, function, psychological, practical and spiritual consequences of serious illness. It is a person- and family- centered approach to care, providing people living with serious illness relief from the symptoms and stress of an illness. Through early integration into the care plan for the seriously ill, palliative care improves quality of life for the patient and family.

Palliative care is:

- Appropriate at any stage of a serious illness, and is beneficial when provided along with treatments of curative or life-prolonging intent.
- Provided over time to patients based on their needs and not their prognosis
- Offered in all care settings and by various organizations, such as phycian practices, health systems, cancer centers, dialysis units, home health agencies, hospices and long-term care providers.
- Focused on what is important to the patient, family and caregivers, assessing their goals and preferences and determining how best to achieve them
- Interdisciplinary to attend to holistic needs of the patient and their identified family and caregivers

Palliative care principles and practices can be delivered by any clinician caring for the seriously ill in any setting.  All clinicians are encouraged to acquire core skills and knowledge regarding palliative care and to refer to palliative care specialists as needed.

## WHO Definition of Palliative Care

Palliative care is an approach that improves the quality of life of patients and their families facing the problem associated with life-threatening illness, through the prevention and relief of suffering by means of early identification and impeccable assessment and treatment of pain and other problems, physical, psychosocial and spiritual. Palliative care:

- provides relief from pain and other distressing symptoms;
- affirms life and regards dying as a normal process;
- intends neither to hasten or postpone death;
- integrates the psychological and spiritual aspects of patient care;
- offers a support system to help patients live as actively as possible until death;
- offers a support system to help the family cope during the patients illness and in their own bereavement;

- uses a team approach to address the needs of patients and their families, including bereavement counselling, if indicated;
- will enhance quality of life, and may also positively influence the course of illness;
- is applicable early in the course of illness, in conjunction with other therapies that are intended to prolong life, such as chemotherapy or radiation therapy, and includes those investigations needed to better understand and manage distressing clinical complications.

WHO Definition of Palliative Care for Children

Palliative care for children represents a special, albeit closely related field to adult palliative care. WHO's definition of palliative care appropriate for children and their families is as follows; the principles apply to other pediatric chronic disorders (WHO; 1998a):

- Palliative care for children is the active total care of the child's body, mind and spirit, and also involves giving support to the family.
- It begins when illness is diagnosed, and continues regardless of whether or not a child receives treatment directed at the disease.
- Health providers must evaluate and alleviate a child's physical, psychological, and social distress.
- Effective palliative care requires a broad multidisciplinary approach that includes the family and makes use of available community resources; it can be successfully implemented even if resources are limited.
- It can be provided in tertiary care facilities, in community health centers and even in children's homes.