


Chapter 6


The Scope and Impact of Palliative Care in Dehradun Addressing Psychological Distress and Technological Integration

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ABSTRACT

Palliative care plays a crucial role in addressing the physical, psychological, emotional, and spiritual needs of patients suffering from life-threatening conditions and chronic illnesses. Despite its recognized benefits, global access remains limited, with only a fraction of patients receiving appropriate care. Palliative care in managing patient illness, alleviating psychological distress, and supporting caregivers. It highlights the role of healthcare professionals, digital technologies, and psychosocial interventions in improving patient well-being. The research is conducted in Dehradun, Uttarakhand, focusing on palliative care centers and the challenges faced by patients and caregivers. Using both primary and secondary data,

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the study examines caregiving processes, emotional burnout, and the integration of assistive technologies in palliative settings. Findings emphasize the importance of awareness, training, and innovative approaches in enhancing palliative education and services. Improving patient-centered care and caregiver support within resource-constrained contexts.

INTRODUCTION

Palliative care is a kind of therapy given to patients who are facing various challenges associated with their lives, such as physical illness, mental illness, life-threatening conditions, and psychological fear (Jaiswal et al., 2014). According to a WHO report, at the global level, approximately 25.7 million people required access to palliative care in 2024. Unfortunately, only 14% of these people received palliative treatment (Vélez-López et al., 2024). Basically, palliative care provides therapeutic support to patients in all aspects—physical, mental, spiritual, and emotional—so that they can recover soon and return to their daily routines. Although it is a beneficial treatment and helps patients avoid taking opioid pain relief, palliative care is also used as counseling for patients who are unable to return to normal life due to a family member. In such cases, palliative care functions as emotional support therapy. As the global population rises, the need for palliative care is also increasing, specifically among the aging population, and in both communicable and non-communicable diseases (Rabow et al., 2004; Almada et al., 2018; Mahmood, 2024).

Due to the significance of palliative care, many people tend to use morphine instead of accessing palliative care services because painkillers provide immediate relief. Therefore, health professionals must be concerned about this, as unnecessary use of painkiller medicines can negatively impact people's health (Thomas, 2007). Palliative care should always be prioritized to relieve patients. Additionally, early access to palliative treatment reduces the need for hospitalization (Hui et al., 2022). Many healthcare professionals provide palliative care according to their roles and responsibilities, including support workers, nursing staff, physicians, pharmacists, physiotherapists, and volunteers (Schweighoffer et al., 2020). If the family becomes weak and unsupportive, it will be difficult to support the patient. Hence, emotional support is a vital part of palliative care, giving encouragement and strengthening family bonds (McCauley et al., 2021).

The UN Human Rights Commission has also recognized palliative care as a human right to health (Agarwal, 2020). According to global records, 38.5% of cardiovascular disease patients require palliative care, 34% of cancer patients, 10% of chronic respiratory disease patients, 5.7% of AIDS patients, and 4.6% of diabetes patients (Micco et al., 2023). This gap is due to various reasons such as lack of

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