



Pharmacist Role in Palliative Care

Muhammed Anwar T.T¹ and Rajalakshmi G.R²

¹Department of Pharmacy Practice and ²Assistant Professor of Pharmacy, College of Pharmaceutical Sciences, Government Medical College, Kozhikode, Kerala-673008, India

Received: 02-10-2020 / Revised Accepted: 23-10-2020 / Published: 25-10-2020

ABSTRACT

Introduction: In the whole world the palliative care team in community health care and hospitals has been established. But pharmacists are not regular members of those teams. As a vital member of this team pharmacists can involve in the medication management of the patient and thereby decreasing the errors in the medicaments.

Materials and Methods: Data were collected from relevant publications describing the roles, functions, activities and interventions in palliative care settings made by the pharmacist.

Result: Data were collected from 27 articles of various countries include USA, UK, Poland, Mexico, Australia etc. The major functions of a pharmacist in palliative care include medication history interview, medication order review, patient counselling, educational programs, pain management, assessing symptoms of the patient, administrative services and identification and prevention of medication related issues.

Conclusion: From the literature, it can be found that palliative care settings are different in between countries and pharmacist has an important role in these settings in various countries. As a legal person regarding drugs pharmacist can play a major role in various drug related activities and improve the quality of the services provided by the palliative care team.

Keywords: Patient counselling; medication order review; medication history interview

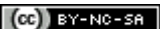
INTRODUCTION

World health organisation defines palliative care as the prevention and relief of patients and their family members affronted by difficulties related to deadly diseases. The difficulties include spiritual, social, psychological and physical suffering of patients and their bystanders. It demands advanced

finding, faultless evaluation and treatment of the above difficulties. Palliative care influence positively to improve the quality of life during the period of disease. It is relevant early in the course of disease in combination with other therapies for extending life and act as a companion during the period of disease to both patients and bystanders. It gives a substitute to disease-improving and life-

Address for Correspondence: Muhammed Anwar T.T., Department of Pharmacy Practice, College of Pharmaceutical Sciences, Government Medical College, Kozhikode, Kerala,673008, India. Email: anwarrasheed008@gmail.com

How to Cite this Article: Muhammed Anwar T.T., Rajalakshmi G.R. Pharmacist Role in Palliative Care. World J Pharm Sci 2020; 8(11): 55-58.

This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License, which allows adapt, share and build upon the work non-commercially, as long as the author is credited and the new creations are licensed under the identical terms. 

© 2020 World J Pharm Sci

prolonging treatment of adequate value by the last part of life and relevant for those who have continuous spiritual, social, psychological and physical sufferings of deadly diseases. It helps to reduce the financial destitute of the poor people due to the huge treatment cost of these life threatening diseases and provide essential treatment to attain a satisfactory level of comfort.^[1]

WHO has released a restructured definition of palliative care in 2002 that reads 'Palliative care is an approach that improves the quality of life of patients and their families facing the problem associated with a 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'.^[2] It is intended to convalescing quality of life of patient and is a multifaceted practice combining psychological physical and spiritual interventions.^[3] It demands a combined network fabricated by doctors, pharmacists, nurses, social workers and dieticians.^[2]

In the whole world the palliative care team in community health care and hospitals has been established. But pharmacists are not regular members of those teams.^[4] As a vital member of this team pharmacists can involve in the medication management of the patient and thereby decreasing the errors in the medicaments and also back-to-back hospital admissions.^[5] The pharmacist can take part in drug information, drug utilization evaluation, patient counselling, patient education, medication review and medication history interview. Pharmacist can give suggestions about drug therapy to the physician and it makes him an essential part of the palliative care team.^[2]

Objectives: The objective of the study was to find out the role of the pharmacist in palliative care settings.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The data were collected from relevant publications describing the roles, functions, activities and interventions in palliative care settings made by the pharmacist. The data were collected by searching some of the electronic databases like Google scholar and PubMed. The information regarding research studies, review articles and various other publications regarding this topic were included.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data obtained from different research and review articles that take part in various part of the world are,

Barbee Jr J et al conducted a study in 2016 in USA and concluded that pharmacists involved in preparation of individualised regimen for patients and carryout interventions comprise of patient counselling, medication reconciliation and also conducting a session for paediatric and geriatric patients for improving their medication management.^[6]

Another study was conducted in 2019 in Netherlands by Crul M et al and concluded that the pharmacist was essential for preparing the care plan for majority of patients as a member of palliative care team. They also compared the role of pharmacist between inpatient and outpatient and found that not only he has role in inpatient therapy but also in outpatient drug distribution and patient education^[7].

A study conducted in Australia in 2010 showed that pharmacist can improve the drug related awareness and expertise of other palliative care members when he includes as member of palliative care team and also involved in drug management of patients and reduce the drug related errors.^[8]

Ise Y et al conducted a study in Japan in 2014 concluded that pharmacists have a moderate role in clinical activity as a palliative care team member and many of them believe that they have more importance in educational field and also as a researcher compared with clinical activity.^[9]

A study conducted in 2016 in USA showed that pharmacist those who have special education and practice in palliative care can provide better quality for the services given by the hospital especially in patient counselling and also give information to the team members regarding new drugs and have a role in monitoring therapeutic responses of the patient.^[10]

A UK based study in 2015 concluded that pharmacist has an important role in palliative care team and involved in patient counselling, medication order evaluation, giving information regarding the effective and safe use of drugs and educating the members of palliative care team.^[11]

A cross-sectional study in residential hospitals of Poland in 2016 showed that Polish pharmacists were not a main element of therapeutic team and have less role in clinical activity. But they mainly involved in administrative services like documentation of drug use, developing drug formulary and managing it in a timely manner.^[12]

Dispenete R et al conducted a study in USA in 2016 concluded that pharmacist involved in various services like adjustment of dose in paediatric and

geriatric patients, drug order evaluation, dose conversions of opioid drugs and give information regarding the safe use of drugs to the staff.^[13]

In Australia a qualitative study was conducted in 2014 and found various advanced roles of pharmacist include, making framework of better quality, giving home drug evaluation for patients in the community and find out the major performance indicators for the assessment of effect of these services.^[14]

A UK based study in 2016 in paediatric palliative care unit showed that pharmacists were involved in providing drug information, giving information regarding compatibility of drugs to other health staff, educating the health care professionals and supplying drugs to various parts of the hospital.^[15]

A USA based prospective study in 2008 in an ambulatory palliative care showed that pharmacist involved in direct care of the patient, resolved medicine related problems, provide medication regimens, participated in ward rounds and assessing symptoms of the patient.^[16]

Austwick E et al, in a UK based review about palliative care in 2004 showed that pharmacists were involved in taking medication histories, patient counselling, prevention and solving of medicament related issues and give educational support to the other staffs.^[17]

In 2007 a report in palliative care institute at Mexico showed that the main functions of the palliative pharmacist included medicine distribution, drug information services, home follow-up of medications and pharmacovigilance programs.^[18]

Gilber P and Stefaniuk K conducted a prospective survey in 2002 in Australia and Canada, reported that Aussies pharmacist mainly involved in drugs and surgical supplies whereas Canadian pharmacist involved in ward round with other health professionals and arranging team meetings.^[19]

Based on Hernden C et al the major role of pharmacist includes, medicine order review, patient counselling, educational programs about drugs and medication reconciliation. The study was conducted in 2006 in USA. The pharmacist is also involved in administrative services and in direct patient care.^[20]

A USA based study in 2007 showed that major functions of pharmacists include medication order review, educational programs for other health professionals, compounding medicaments,

answering queries related to prescription and also in assessing patient symptoms.^[21]

An Australian based report on palliative care by Jiwa M et al showed that important role of pharmacist included medication review, psychological support to the patients and give efficient and safe medication to the patient.^[22]

Leverence K involved in a commentary about palliative care in USA showed that palliative pharmacists are involved in ward rounds, formulary preparation and maintenance, educating other health professionals and medication order review.^[23]

Naidu D et al (2015) in USA, a Conference abstract about palliative ward concluded that pharmacist intervention showed a significant decrease in the pain score of the patients and he can make an impact in 91 % of the patients within 24 hours.^[24]

A Swedish prospective study in palliative home care centre showed that inclusion of pharmacist in the medical team improves the medication handling process, reduce the cost of the therapy and also helpful in handling questions regarding drug issues.^[25]

A review on palliative care in USA showed that pharmacists involved in documenting medication history, preventing medicament related problems, patient counselling and drug information services.^[26]

A prospective study in Qatar showed that clinical pharmacists are involved in designing drug regimens, patient counselling, patient education and maintaining the optimal dose to the patients.^[27]

CONCLUSION

From the literature it can be found that palliative care settings are different in between countries and pharmacist has an important role in these settings in various countries. But some countries like Poland did not give more importance to the clinical activity of pharmacists than their administrative work.

The major functions of a pharmacist in palliative care include medication history interview, medication order review, patient counselling, educational programs, pain management, assessing symptoms of the patient, administrative services and identification and prevention of medicament related issues. As a legal person regarding drugs pharmacist can play a major role in various drug related activities and improve the quality of the services provided by palliative care team.

REFERENCE

1. Integrating palliative care and symptom relief into primary health care: a WHO guide for planners, implementers and managers. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2018.
2. World Health Organization. WHO expert committee report: cancer pain relief and palliative care. Geneva, Switzerland: WHO, 2002.
3. WHO Definition of Palliative Care: World Health Organisation.2017. Available from: <http://www.who.int/cancer/palliative/definition/en> (04/01/2017).
4. Dean TW. Pharmacist as a member of the palliative care team. *Can J Hosp Pharm*. 1987; 40: 95–96.
5. Walker K. Role of the pharmacist in palliative care. *Progress Palliative Care* 2010, 18(3):132-139.
6. Barbee Jr J, Kelley S, Andrews J, Harman A. *Palliative Care: The Role of the Pharmacist*: Pharmacy Times; 2016.
7. Crul M, Oosterhof P. The oncology pharmacist as part of the palliative treatment team. *Int J Pharm Pract*. 2020; 28(1): 92-6.
8. Hussainy SY, Box M, Scholes S. Piloting the role of a pharmacist in a community palliative care multidisciplinary team: an Australian experience. *BMC Palliative Care* 2011; 10(1):16.
9. Ise Y, Morita T, Katayama S, Kizawa Y. The activity of palliative care team pharmacists in designated cancer hospitals: a nationwide survey in Japan. *J Pain Symptom Manag* 2014; 47(3):588-93.
10. Demler TL. Pharmacist Involvement in Hospice and Palliative Care. *US Pharmacist*. 2016; 41(3): HS2–5.
11. Gibbs M. The Contribution of the Clinical Pharmacist in Palliative Care. In: Cherny NI, Fallon M, Kaasa S, Portenoy RK, Currow DC, Eds; *Oxford Textbook of Palliative Medicine*. 5 ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press; 2015; pp: 228–35.
12. Pawłowska I, Pawłowski L, Lichodziejewska-Niermierko M. The role of a pharmacist in a hospice: a nationwide survey among hospice directors, pharmacists and physicians. *Eur J Hosp Pharm* 2016; 23: 106–112.
13. Dispennette R, Hall L, Elliott D. Activities of palliative care and pain management clinical pharmacists. *Am J Health-Syst Pharm* 2015; 72: 999–1000.
14. Swetenham K, Rowett D, Stephenson D. Clinical networks influencing policy and practice: the establishment of advanced practice pharmacist roles for specialist palliative care services in South Australia. *Aust Health Rev* 2014; 38: 238–241.
15. Khan J, Gaze S, Tomlin S. The role of the pharmacist in paediatric palliative care. *Arch Dis Child*. 2016; 101(9): A1–A37.
16. Atayee R, Best B, Daniels C. Development of an ambulatory palliative care pharmacist practice. *J Palliat Med*. 2008; 11(8): 1077–1083.
17. Austwick E, Brooks D. Role of the palliative care pharmacist: an example from North Derbyshire, UK. *Prog Palliat Care*. 2004; 12(1): 2–5.
18. Escutia Gutierrez R, Cortez Alvarez CR, Alvarez Alvarez RM, Flores Hernandez JL, Gutierrez Godinez J, Lopez Y Lopez JG. Pharmaceutical services in a Mexican pain relief and palliative care institute. *Pharm Pract*. 2007; 5(4): 174–178.
19. Gilbar P, Stefaniuk K. The role of the pharmacist in palliative care: results of a survey conducted in Australia and Canada. *JPalliat Care*. 2002; 18(4): 287–292.
20. Herndon CM, Nee D, Atayee RS, et al. ASHP Guidelines on the pharmacist’s role in palliative and hospice care. *Am J Health-Syst Pharm*. 2016; 73: 1351–1367.
21. Hill R. Clinical pharmacy services in a home-based palliative care program. *Am J Health-Syst Pharm*. 2007; 64: 806–810.
22. Jiwa M, O’Connor M, Hughes J, et al. *The Role of the Pharmacist in the Provision of Palliative Care*. Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing; 2007.
23. Leverage K. What is the role of pharmacy in palliative and end-of-life care? *ONS Connect*. 2015; 30(2): 33.
24. Naidu D, Jones K, Kanyer D, et al. Clinical pharmacist interventions as a member of palliative medicine interdisciplinary team in a community hospital. 2015 ACCP Global Conference on Clinical Pharmacy; San Francisco: Pharmacotherapy.
25. Norrstrom B, Cannerfelt I-B, Frid H, et al. Introduction of pharmaceutical expertise in a palliative care team in Sweden. *Pharm World Sci*. 2010; 32: 829–834.
26. Walker K. Role of the pharmacist in palliative care. *Prog PalliatCare*. 2010; 18(3): 132–139.
27. Wilby K, Mohamad A, AlSaadiAlYafei S. Evaluation of clinical pharmacy services offered for palliative care patients in Qatar. *JPainPalliat Care Pharmacother*. 2014; 28: 212–215.