

Palliative Care as Response to Suffering at End of Life

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Persons suffering from chronic and life limiting illnesses often have unrelieved symptoms such as pain, depression, fatigue, and psychosocial and spiritual distress. In Romania they are frequently left in the care of their families with little support from the health care system. It seems a paradox that those who are the sickest persons in a country find little place in the health care system. This article presents palliative care as a solution to the suffering for these patients and their families by describing the concept, models of services, its beneficiaries and benefits and presenting the history of development of hospice and palliative care worldwide and in Romania.

Keywords: *suffering, palliative care, beneficiaries, benefits, services, history, worldwide, Romania*

Suffering at End of Life

Suffering Is Experienced when the Wholeness of a Person Is Threatened

For professionals working with patients in the final part of their life the most frequent model used to describe suffering is the concept of “total pain” described by Dame Cicely Saunders, the founder of the modern hospice movement¹. According to this model the four domains of pain that, in their totality, constitute “total pain” are: physical pain (and other distressing physical symptoms); psychological or emotional pain (eg. anxiety related to progression of disease, change of body image-hair loss after chemotherapy); social pain (eg. fear of separation from family members); and spiritual pain.

If we look just at the physical suffering a study done in 2009 in Romania concerning the patients with advanced cancer in the community the numbers of symptoms they experienced was on average 12,8 symptoms for patients at end of life². Unrelieved, these symptoms can put a high burden on both the patients and their family.

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¹ Cicely Saunders, Nigel Sykes (ed.), *The management of terminal malignant disease*, 3rd edition, London 1993, p. 45.

² Luminița Dumitrescu L, Marinela Van den Heuvel-Olaroiu, “Caracteristicile medicale, psihosociale și socio-demografice ale pacienților înrolați într-un program de îngrijire paliativă la domiciliu în România” in: *PALIATIA* 2 (1/2009), p. 4-14, <http://www.paliatia.eu/arhivapdf/PALIATIA-Vol2-Nr1-Ian2009-ro.pdf>, viewed on May 2014.