



THE KENYA PALLIATIVE CARE POLICY BRIEF

“Towards attaining the highest standards of palliative care”

Executive Summary

Kenya is a signatory to various international and regional treaties, declarations and resolutions that commit governments to ensure access to holistic palliative care services for children and adults at all levels of care.

Access to palliative care is increasingly recognized as a component of human right to health, which is stipulated in the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) Article 12.1 (1996). Kenya’s Constitution and legislative framework recognizes the right to highest attainable standards of health including the right to



healthcare services. The country is progressing towards universal health coverage which aims to ensure that all Kenyans have access to quality promotive, preventive, curative, rehabilitative and palliative health services are provided without suffering financial hardship. **Palliative care is a basic human right and ensures client-centered quality care with dignity.** A strong evidence base exists supporting investment in palliative care proving its impact on **improvement of quality of care**, patient **satisfaction** and reduction of **cost of care through prevention of unnecessary and costly health services, particularly hospitalizations.** Some major considerations for investment in palliative care include allocation of resources to set up more facilities, training of more healthcare providers on palliative care,



provision of pain medicines and putting in place policies towards increased and rational prescription for better access to pain medications.

INTRODUCTION

Palliative care is an approach that improves the quality of life of patients with life threatening illnesses and their families through the treatment of pain and other physical, psychosocial and spiritual problems. It prevents and relieves suffering through the **early identification, correct assessment** and **treatment of pain** and other problems, whether physical, psychosocial or spiritual. When introduced early it can lead to more appropriate and less expensive care.

Worldwide, an estimated 56.8 million people need palliative care annually; 78% of them living in low- and middle-income countries but only a small minority of those in need of such care have access to it resulting in great suffering. The rising burden of Non-Communicable and existing infectious disease burden has raised the need for palliative care in Kenya. The need for expansion of access to appropriate, standardized, holistic palliative care for adults and children in Kenya requires a national policy to guide proper decision making, goal setting and resource allocation both at the national and county governments.

Key benefits of palliative care

- ✓ *Improves quality of life*
- ✓ *Reduces hospitalization days*
- ✓ *Prolongs survival*
- ✓ *Reduces avoidable spending*

Evidence shows that limited or lack of palliative care leads to unnecessary unaddressed pain and suffering for patients and their families, strain to the health systems due to frequent unnecessary hospitalizations and financial burden. The PC policy offers a sustainable solution to Palliative Care development





This policy is anchored on seven (7) pillars:



Advocacy and Communication- Promote access to information and awareness on palliative care among all stakeholders

Leadership and Governance

Ensure strategic governance frameworks exist with proper co-ordination, oversight and accountability



Service Delivery-Ensure access to holistic and culturally appropriate palliative care services at all level of the health care system.

Availability and access to essential medicines and commodities-ensure access and affordability of palliative care medicines and commodities at all levels of care

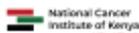


Human resource and education -Ensure an adequate, knowledgeable, skilled and motivated health workforce for provision of palliative care services

Health Information Systems and Research provide timely, reliable and accessible quality health service information for evidence-based decision-making and research to generate innovative solutions



Healthcare Financing- mobilize adequate financial resources to facilitate successful implementation, monitoring and evaluation and sustainable provision of palliative care services



WHO IS THIS PALLIATIVE POLICY DOCUMENT FOR?

The palliative care policy was developed through consultative meetings with various stakeholders in palliative care. Through this policy we aim to achieve equity in access to quality palliative care. The policy targets:

- ✓ **Policy makers:** guidance in health services planning
- ✓ **National and County governments-** guidance to integrate and allocate resources for palliative care
- ✓ **Health care workers-** empowering health care providers at all levels of care and palliative care specialists to provide PC services
- ✓ **Persons living with palliative care needs (PLWPCNs)-** strengthen systems to improve their quality of life and address their needs
- ✓ **Health development partners:** support the development of palliative care
- ✓ **Educational Institutions:** integrate palliative care into health workers training in diploma, undergraduate and postgraduate level.
- ✓ **General Public** – Information and awareness on palliative care provision

OTHER KEY POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

- End of life care
- Advanced Directives/Advanced Care Planning
- Survivorship
- Palliative care for special populations such as persons with disabilities, children {neonates and adolescents}, older persons, refugees, displaced persons, inmates, TB patients, and homeless persons

REFERENCES

- World Health Organization definition on palliative care: <https://www.who.int/health-topics/palliative-care>
- Kenya Cancer Policy 2019-2030: <https://www.health.go.ke/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Kenya-Cancer-Policy-2020.pdf>
- Who benefits from palliative care: <http://www.thewhpc.org/resources/item/global-atlas-of-palliative-care-2nd-ed-2020>

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