

General Information on Palliative Care in Ukraine

The issue of population insenescence and increasing of the quantity of people suffering from incurable diseases is relevant for Ukraine to the same extent as to other countries. Annually about 160 thousand cases of cancer diseases are registered in Ukraine. 85 % of patients die at home, often not having access to adequate pain management. It is caused by a number of factors, the main of which is imperfection of the legislation about opioids turnover and insufficient granting of medical and social services for incurably sick patients. Despite the fact, that the first hospices in Ukraine were founded 10 years ago in Ivano-Frankivsk, Korosten, Lviv and Kharkiv, Palliative Care (PC) System has been forming in Ukraine only since 2006 with active support of Ministry of Health, Ministry of Social Affairs.

On the initiative of All-Ukrainian Council for Patients' Rights and Safety the Interdisciplinary Task Force was created by Order of Ministry of Health. It consists of 30 experts: representatives of the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Social Affairs, professionals of medical associations, patients, specialists in the sphere of medicine and social sphere and clergy.

The aim of the group is to work out the regulatory legal acts in the sphere of PC in Ukraine. A number of documents has been worked out. The main of them is "Concept of hospices". Now the Task Force members work on change of the legislation on pain management and the lay-out of standards and reports on PC in Ukraine.

The systems of public health and social care have limited opportunities and experience in preparation and education of professionals in PC. Monitoring show that about 90 % of medical workers have a low level of knowledge about PC, pain management, age patterns in geriatrics, etc.

Our further plans include establishment of "Law on Palliative Care", where all the principles of the adequate organization of PC in Ukraine and protection of the rights of palliative patients will be registered. It is also planned to work out and advocate of national and regional programs for development of the PC, registry of patients, who need PC, registry of providers of PC. The association of the PC works on creation of the educational and methodical centre of PC. On its basis seminars, trainings and educational programs on PC for doctors and nurses will be organized.

On the whole, as on November 2007 about 500 stationary palliative beds (places in the hospice) were in operation. However, there are approximately 300 establishments of social care, which provide help for elderly people, and patients with incurable diseases. Also there exist such public organizations as Caritas, the Red Cross, Khesed, etc., which care about palliative patients in Ukraine.

There are no criteria defining the basis for placement of the patient into a hospice in Ukraine. Therefore very often hospices turn into places for long stay of geriatric patients or homeless people.