

Report on 14th Asia Pacific Hospice Palliative Care Conference (13-14th November 2021)

Greetings from Bhutan, I am Dr Sonam Choki, a final year resident in the Department of General Practice, Khesar Gyalpo University of medical sciences of Bhutan. I was first introduced to palliative care by a Dr Julia Fox Jenkins who is a palliative care specialist practising in the United States, she came to Bhutan through the Health Volunteer Overseas program. Under her mentorship, I was able to meet some patients who were on palliative care in Bhutan. Palliative care is a new field of medicine and has to gain recognition in Bhutan, we have a palliative care unit in the national referral hospital manned by a few nurses and few doctors, but none are specialized in palliative care.

Summary of sessions attended:

- Introductory session where key messages from the World Health Organization on palliative care.
- Building bridges by Dr Frank Brennan, he talked about the global inequities in access to palliative care, what the core principles of palliative care are, the importance of team work and communication between other specialities in managing patients.
- Pediatric palliative care in Taiwan by Dr Frank Lu, he talked about the Taiwan hospice palliative care act, PCC development in Taiwan and PPC care path.
- Dr Masan Mori presented East- Asian collaborative studies in Palliative care. He presented cross-cultural research questions and domestic research questions in Japan, Korean and Taiwan, talked about the key challenges and, key strategies and factors for success in palliative care.
- Dr Rachelle Bernack talked about the serious illness care for clinicians. She talked about the methods of emotional engagement in serious illness conversation, methods of skill practice and the challenges with prognosis.
- Under capacity building in palliative care, Julia Bolti presented on launching hospice and palliative care services in Kenya. She presented the activities of services which included Voluntary counselling and testing, conducting HIV/ AIDS awareness campaigns, care for orphans and vulnerable children, holistic care and education.

Through this conference, I have learnt the evolution of palliative care in children and in adults, the challenges faced and the paths for a way forward in achieving success in palliative care. In a world with diverse cultures and beliefs, it is important to talk about end-of-life care, bring about changes in the perception of patients and their care givers. We must respect the decisions made by our patients and provide not only symptom relief but also help in bringing spiritual wellbeing of our patients and their families. We must work together as a team, communicate not only with our patients and their families, but also within doctors from different specialities and work together for the well-being of our patients.