**Pediatric Palliative Care in Tajikistan: ADAPT Profile**

The Assessing Doctors’ Attitudes on Palliative Treatment (ADAPT) study was conducted in 2019, in collaboration with local stakeholders. The study identified physician access, knowledge, and perceptions on palliative care integration for children with cancer as outlined by the World Health Organization (WHO) guide in 2018. The study received 424 physician responses from 11 countries. (For published references, see p.2.)

**WHO Guide for Pediatric Palliative Care**

Palliative care is defined by the WHO as the prevention and relief of patient suffering and the “ethical responsibility of health systems” that “should be integrated with and complement prevention, early diagnosis and treatment.”

Palliative care improves treatment outcomes such as:
- Improved quality of life
- Better pain control and symptom management
- Decreased hospitalizations and fewer days in the intensive care unit

Palliative care integrated into health care systems at all levels and home care reduce health care costs by:
- Decreasing unnecessary resource utilization
- Being less expensive
- Yielding better outcomes.

**Access to Pediatric Palliative Care**

- **19%** physicians reported having **no access** to palliative care consultation in their practice
- **50%** indicated that palliative care consultation is **not available** when they feel it is needed for children with cancer
- **31%** felt that palliative care was involved **too late** in the treatment of a child with cancer

**Eurasia Regional Differences by Country: % physicians reporting no access to palliative care consultation**

Regional range in access: 18-96%

**Barriers to Early Palliative Care Integration**

Physicians in Tajikistan indicated that limited access, lack of home-based services, family resistance, are the most significant barriers to palliative care consultation for children with cancer.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>% Physicians indicating the following barriers as important:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Limited access</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Lack of home-based services</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Family resistance</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Limited knowledge</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Time constraints</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Physician discomfort</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Prognosis uncertainty</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Physician desire to maintain hope</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Cost</strong></td>
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</table>

**For additional information:** Integrating Palliative Care and Symptom Relief Into Paediatrics: A WHO Guide for Health Care Planners, Implementers and Managers. World Health Organization; 2018.
**Physician Confidence in Delivering Palliative Care**

- **69%** do not feel confident assessing and treating the physical needs of pediatric patients with serious incurable illness.
- **31%** do not feel confident assessing and treating the emotional needs of pediatric patients with serious incurable illness and their families.
- **44%** do not feel confident providing grief and bereavement care to the families of children who die.
- **56%** feel burdened by their inability to control the suffering of children at the end-of-life.

**Physician Knowledge**

% of correct answers by content category:

- **Timing of consultation**: 44%
- **Inter-disciplinary communication**: 54%
- **Misconceptions**: 85%
- **Patient suffering**: 88%
- **Family Communication**: 47%

**Strengths**

1. Strong desire among physicians (100%) for more palliative care education
2. Deep understanding of the potential of palliative care to improve quality of life for children with cancer

**Recommended Country Next Steps**

1. Increase access to pediatric palliative care consultations and other multi-disciplinary specialists in inpatient and outpatient settings
2. Develop national policies and institutional guidelines to optimize the timing of pediatric palliative care integration for children with cancer
3. Create didactic and clinical training, focusing on family communication and timing of integration, to increase physician confidence providing all components of pediatric palliative care
4. Create opportunities for accredited training in pediatric palliative care for physicians, as well as psychologists, nurses, and social workers

**Regional Implementation of ADAPT in Eurasia**

1) Regionally adapted pediatric palliative care curriculum based on identified knowledge gaps
2) Eurasian working group on palliative care through the Eurasian Alliance in Pediatric Oncology (EurADO)

**References and Additional Information**


Barriers to the early integration of palliative care in pediatric oncology in 11 Eurasian countries. Cancer 2020; 126(22): 4984-4993.

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