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Palliative Care: First two years' experience of a newly developed unit

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Introduction People tend to live longer with NCDs and related co-morbidities in Sri Lanka which create the need for providing comprehensive palliative care. Health professionals in Northern Sri Lanka identified the national need and piloted a community-based palliative care services in two districts.

Objective The study aims to describe the disease pattern and the symptoms presented to the home-based palliative care in Vavuniya District.

Methodology Secondary clinical data were obtained from the medical records of 172 patients who are registered with home-based palliative care which is provided by a team of a doctor and nurses attached to District General Hospital Vavuniya over the period of 2 years 2019 to 2021). The demographic factors, morbidity pattern and clinical presentation of the sample were presented as descriptive statistical figures by using SPSS software.

Results Out of 190 home visit patients, 119 patients registered in the palliative care clinic and another 53 patients registered in the hospital clinics. The team made 471 follow-ups visits. Among them 38.95%(n=68) were bedridden. The median age was 71(range: 17-101) years, with the gender ratio of 107. Most of them diagnosed with Cancer 70.93%(n=122) followed by CKD 11.62%(n=20), Heart Failure 8.7%(n=15). Pain was the chief complain 73.87%(n=127) followed by constipation 55.81%(n=96) & difficulty in breathing 36%(n=63). Home-based procedures were carried out for 35.46%(n=61). All the patients were expressed satisfaction of the services.

Conclusion Community palliative care is well received and benefited for the community in Vavuniya. These services must be expanded with the support of the state and the community.