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ВСЕМИРНАЯ ОРГАНИЗАЦИЯ
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ЕВРОПЕЙСКОЕ РЕГИОНАЛЬНОЕ БЮРО

WHO European Regional Technical Expert Meeting – Palliative Care Nursing and Midwifery
Virtual meeting
May 12, 2022

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April 2022

Original: English

Scope and purpose

Background:

Scaling up access to palliative care in the European Region

Palliative care has been recognised as an integral part of universal health coverage[1] and a key strategy to achieve and maintain population health – along with prevention, promotion, treatment, and rehabilitation[2]. Palliative care is a crucial part of integrated, people-centred health services, at all levels of care and should be available to all who need it regardless of age or diagnosis. In the WHO European Region there is a rapidly ageing population with an increasing number of people with non-communicable diseases. Each year it is estimated that five million people need palliative care in the European region and of these, 65% have no access to palliative care services. Developing and integrating palliative care requires both a primary health care and a public health approach that maximises the level and distribution of health and wellbeing across the whole of society through multi-sectoral policy and action[3]. This is a part of the WHO European regional office 'Programme of work'[4] which was endorsed by Ministers of Health during the 2020 Regional Committee.

The scope of nursing and midwifery in delivering palliative care

Palliative care should be an integrated part of care and where needed, should ideally be introduced early in the disease trajectory. Teamwork is a key part of the philosophy and practice of palliative care. Nurses and midwives play an important role in the provision and development of hospice and palliative care services in at least two ways:

1. The proximity of nurses to the patients and their families provides nurses with the opportunity to identify, advocate for, connect and provide support for the patient. Nurses work in a range of roles and settings providing care for patients with life-limiting conditions across the lifespan (including neonatal and children's palliative care). Palliative care should be included in the education and training of all healthcare professionals, including nurses and midwives. As the largest proportion of the health and care workforce, nurses and midwives are ideally placed to provide palliative care

[1] WHA67.19 Strengthening of palliative care as a component of comprehensive care throughout the life course https://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/WHA67/A67_R19-en.pdf?ua=1&ua=1

2. World Health Organization. Declaration of Alma-Ata. International Conference on Primary Health Care, Alma-Ata, USSR, 6–12 September 1978. (Available at: www.who.int/publications/almaata_declaration_en.pdf)

[3] World Health Organization. Integrating palliative care and symptom relief into primary healthcare. A WHO guide for planners, implementers, and mangers (2018) https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/274559/9789241514477-eng.pdf?ua=1

[4] WHO Euro (2019) https://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/health-policy/european-programme-of-work/european-programme-of-work-20202025-united-action-for-better-health-in-europe

and to identify situations where there is a need to engage specialized palliative care services.

2. Palliative care also provides the opportunity for advanced practice roles[5]. Advanced training either at the vocational or university level can support a multidisciplinary team in providing specialized services and support improved access to pain management, psychosocial counselling and specialized palliative care to address challenges faced by patients and families.

Enabling nurses and midwives to deliver palliative care

Work across the region has shown that general nurses and midwives do not always have access to adequate training, generally and more specific to palliative care, that they do not have opportunities consolidate their competencies with relevant practice-based training, that they do not then have opportunities to apply these competencies in practice and are therefore not always used to their full potential to ensure universal access to health and care services, including palliative care services.

It is, however, critical to ensure that all nurses and midwives are competent and able to deliver palliative care for patients who have life-limiting conditions. Providing a holistic approach to care, it is also important that they feel confident when communicating with the patient and their families.

The World Health Assembly resolution 67.19 on palliative care highlights the need to strengthen palliative care through the development of national palliative care policies, access to essential medicines for pain and other symptoms[6], education and training for all health care staff in palliative care, and the integration of palliative care services into existing health care systems in the WHO European Region. Specific to nursing and midwifery, the resolution calls for "basic training and continuing education on palliative care should be integrated as a routine element of all undergraduate medical and nursing and midwifery professional education, and as part of in-service training". This is further endorsed by the recent World Health Assembly resolution 74.15 on strengthening nursing and midwifery[7], based on the State of the World's Nursing[8] and Midwifery[9] Reports but also the accompanying Global Strategic Directions for Strengthening Nursing and Midwifery[10] and The Roadmap for Strengthening Nursing and Midwifery in the WHO European Region[11], there is a clearer understanding of the areas of particular focus required to strengthen these professions contributions to universal health coverage.

As part of this commitment to palliative care and nursing and midwifery development, the Regional Office will organise a technical expert meeting focusing on palliative care nursing and midwifery. The meeting is aimed at nursing and midwifery experts at the country level representing government, associations, academia, and other professional bodies to understand how the Regional Office can support Member States in scaling up and rolling out supports for

[5] Martins Pieria S et al. (2021) Nursing education on palliative care across Europe: Results and recommendations from the EAPC Taskforce on preparation for practice Palliative Medicine 35(1):130-141 in palliative care nursing across the EU based on an online-survey and country reports
[6] WHA 67.22 Access to essential medicines https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/162868/A67_R22-en.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y
[7] World Health Assembly resolution 74.15 "Strengthening nursing and midwifery: investments in education, jobs, leadership and service delivery" https://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/WHA74/A74_ACONF3-en.pdf.
[8] 2020 State of the World's Nursing Report: https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240003279
[9] 2021 State of the World's Midwifery Report: https://www.unfpa.org/sowmy
[10] Global Strategic Directions for Nursing and Midwifery (2020-2025) https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240033863
[11] Building better together: Roadmap to guide implementation of the Global Strategic Directions for Nursing and Midwifery in the WHO European Region (2021): https://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/Health-systems/nursing-and-midwifery/publications/2021/building-better-together-roadmap-to-guide-implementation-of-the-global-strategic-directions-for-nursing-and-midwifery-in-the-who-european-region-2021

nurses and midwives and specifically to identify areas of need to advance and implement palliative care nursing and midwifery competencies in the WHO European Region countries. The meeting will be organised jointly by the Palliative Care and Nursing and Midwifery programmes in the WHO European Regional office in collaboration with experts from a range of organisations and academic institutions with expertise in palliative care nursing and midwifery. WHO country representatives and those active in the development of palliative care and nursing and midwifery in member countries will be invited to attend.

Date and time
The technical expert meeting will be held on **May 12, 2022** and the duration will be 1.5 hours from **11:00 to 12:30 Central European Time**.

Aim: To identify areas of need to advance and implement palliative care nursing and midwifery competencies in the WHO European Region countries.

Objectives
1. To brief participants on the existing WHO guidance and tools on Palliative Care and how these can be applied to the development of nursing and midwifery
2. To establish a shared understanding of the role and potential of palliative care nurses in the WHO European Region
3. To identify and explore opportunities and challenges to scaling up the role of nurses and midwives in the delivery of palliative care services

Participants
Palliative care and nursing and midwifery experts and representatives from relevant ministries, Government Chief Nursing and Midwifery Officers (GCNMOs), education institutions, associations and other relevant partners in the WHO European Region.

Languages of the meeting
The meeting will be held in English with simultaneous interpretation in English and Russian. Preparatory documents will also be available in English and Russian.