

THE CURRENT STATUS OF PEDIATRIC PALLIATIVE CARE IN TURKEY

Chapter 9

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The World Health Organization (WHO) defines palliative care as “a methodology that enhances the quality of life of patients and their relatives facing the problem related with life-threatening illness, through the prevention and relief of suffering by means of early identification and impeccable assessment and treatment of pain and other problems, physical, psychosocial and spiritual” (WHO, 2012). Paediatric palliative care is another approach in palliative medicine which is based on similar principles of adult palliative care programs. According to the WHO (2014), 63 children (under 15 years old) out of 100,000 populations need palliative care at the end of life and approximately 1.2 million children (%52 male, %48 female) need palliative care at the end of their lives in all over the world (WHO, 2014). Children, who need palliative care at the end of life, are commonly diagnosed with congenital anomalies, neonatal conditions, meningitis, protein energy malnutrition, cardiovascular diseases and HIV/AIDS (ibid). Holistic approach of paediatric palliative and end of care includes the active care of the child’s body, spirit and mind, and also includes giving support to the relatives (WHO, 2014). The crucial component of paediatric palliative care is defined by World Palliative Care Alliance; 1) palliative care begins when the children or young adult diagnosed with life threatening illness, 2) palliative care provider should be aware of child’s physical, psychological, and social distress which is caused by disease and they help them to deal with these problems, 3) palliative care services might be provided in community health centres, in tertiary care facilities, and even in children’s homes (WHO, 2014). Effective paediatric palliative care includes a multidisciplinary team work (e.g. practitioners, nurses, physiotherapists, social workers, etc.). Members of this team should assess and relieve a child’s physical, psychological, and social distress (ibid). In this context, Physiotherapists have important place to evaluate and cope with physical challenges in palliative care at end of the life. However, there is no specific policy or document which is described role of physiotherapists in paediatric palliative care in many countries.

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