



InTouch

The newsletter of the
Palliative Care Department
Emmanuel Hospital Association

Striving to Serve – Stretching to Love



Volume 2

Number 2

May 2012

Visitors

We were privileged to have several visitors to the palliative care services at HBM Hospital, Lalitpur over the past few months. Jan, Emily and David Andrew blessed us with their presence and willingness to lend a helping hand. Dr. Debbie Watkinson, Consultant, Department of Palliative Medicine, National Cancer Centre, Singapore spent several days. She helped greatly with patient care especially with two patients admitted in the ward with complicated cancer pain.



Kamala Jain had cancer of the gall bladder with spread to the liver. She had been treated at Tata Memorial Cancer Centre, Mumbai and was on morphine for pain control.

She presented in the out-patient department with such severe upper abdominal pain that she could not lie flat and sat hunched over both day and night. Realizing that she was not absorbing the morphine, pain control was managed with injectable tramadol in equi-analgesic doses to the morphine, and steroids to decrease tumour oedema. Within 24 hours she was able to lie down straight for the first time in several months. She also regained her appetite. Her relatives were very comforted.

She died peacefully at home a week later surrounded by her loved ones.

Dr. Debbie took classes for the medical staff and local practitioners on pain management and terminal care (the last 72 hours).

The staff understood the principles of the WHO analgesic ladder; equi-analgesic doses of common pain medications; side effects and their management; and decision making for symptom control in the last 72 hours of life.





Dr. Bill Crawley, a GP from the UK, who also works at the Pilgrims Hospice gifted the PC Department with 3 syringe drivers for continuous drug infusions. Dr. Crawley raised funds from his town near Canterbury to buy the syringe drivers. He taught the staff how to use the drivers and gave a useful handbook to outline which medications can be mixed.

Dedication of an Income Generation Project for Families of Patients with Terminal Illnesses at HBMH, Lalitpur

A small tailoring centre was opened to help relatives acquire skills that could help generate an income for the family. Several young adults who lost a parent are left with little or no means of support. In some families the children become bonded labourers to moneylenders from whom their parents took a loan for medical treatment. Repaying the high interest alone could take an entire lifetime.

Two girls are presently being taught by a local tailor.

- Pooja (20), father has cancer of the tongue; surgery done and cannot work; mother is a housewife; older brother works.
- Pinky (13), orphan; lost her father to cancer; mother left the home; living with 1 older and 2 younger cousins (also orphans). Older cousin is presently the earning member in the family.



Training

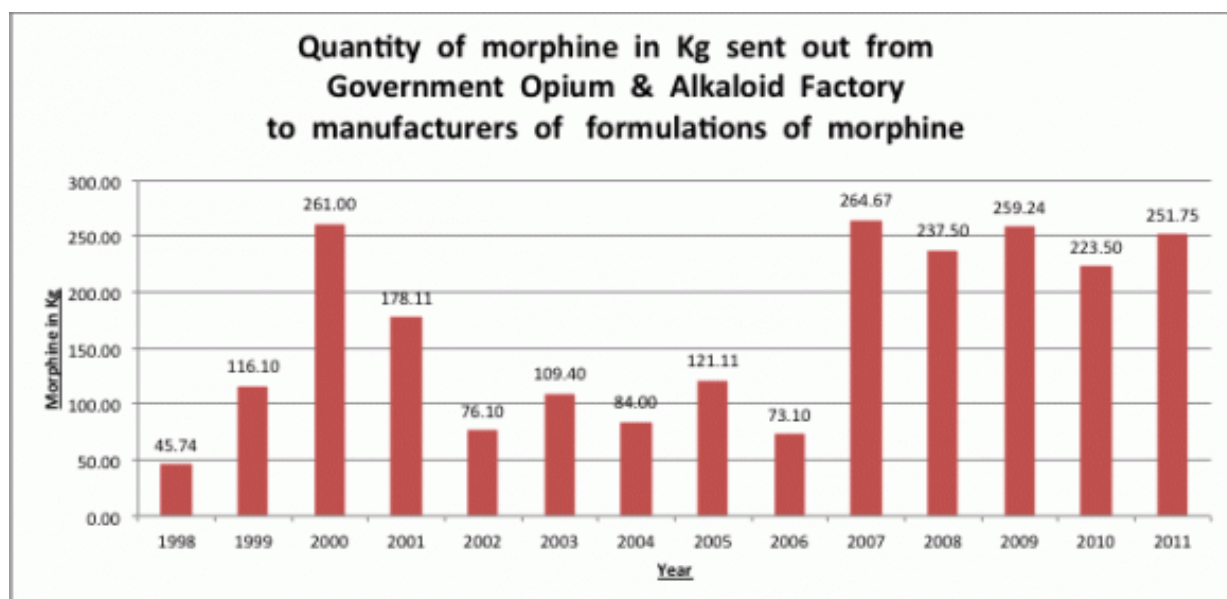
1. Dr. Sunitha Verghese is undergoing training this month at the Trivandrum Institute of Palliative Services run by Dr. M.R Rajagopal.
2. Dr. Nepuni Athikho DNB (Family Medicine) is applying for 1-year training offered by the Indian Association of Palliative Care (distance learning) in preparation of starting palliative care in Makunda's branch hospital at Ambassa.
3. A Palliative Care workshop on leadership and training is planned for June 11-15 at Landour Community Hospital, Mussoorie. The resource persons are Dr. Mhoira Leng, Palliative Care Physician, Cairdeas, Scotland (presently working in Kampala, Uganda), Dr. Grahame Tosh and Dr. Chitra Venkatesh. This is mainly to build the capacity of EHA doctors and nurses to provide training, leadership and self-care.

- Dr. Ann Thyle attended a 5-day Continuing Professional Development course in Edinburgh at the end of February. It was a great opportunity to learn from experienced teachers in the field and interact with participants from African countries and Israel.

Update on morphine sales from the Government Opium and Alkaloid Works (OAW)

The **Opium and Alkaloid Works (OAW)** is an Indian government-owned company located in the city of Ghazipur, and the town Neemuch. After 1976, the Chief Controller of Factories replaced the Narcotics Commissioner (who is Central Excise Commissioner on Deputation) of India as head of the OAW. The **Ghazipur** factory is located about 80 km East of Varanasi and 40 km from Buxar at the entry point of Bihar State. It was the Benaras Opium Agency, an entity of the East India Company, since 1820. In 1945, it began extracting alkaloids in addition to processing opium. It is the biggest authorized opium factory in the globe. **Neemuch** is in the Malwa region of Madhya Pradesh. It is known as India's Eye donation capital as it accounts for the highest per capita eye donation rate in the country.

OAW's two factories are the only manufacturer of morphine powder in the country. All of it is used in the country (India exports raw opium). So this should reflect the consumption trend of morphine in the country.



The peaks in 2000 and 2001 were because of the huge quantity bought by the Government for free distribution to the regional cancer centres (RCCs). Most of it was never used. The 2007 peak was a compensatory rise caused by interruptions in supply in the previous two years, and is therefore artificial.

Despite these confounding factors, the fact remains that in the past four years, the consumption of morphine in the country has been stable, not rising. This is worrying because it means that access to morphine is still minimal compared to the number of terminally ill people living with debilitating pain and dying in misery.

InTouch

This newsletter is intended to keep other units in EHA, our partners and supporters informed about what is happening in Palliative Care in EHA. We hope to send it out about every 8-10 weeks, with news on how the program is developing, special events related to palliative care, and human interest stories about our patients. We welcome your comments and suggestions. Write to: ann@eha-health.org.