

Palliative medicine – a family physician’s opinion

Opinion

A family physician focusses on person-centered medicine, considering the family, social, work and even economic context, mastering the comprehensive and continued care. It is known that a family physician is, perhaps, the only doctor with ability, overall knowledge and self-giving, to follow their patients from birth to death. Most of the time the journey between birth and death, fortunately, is long. However, sometimes this journey may become painful, dragged over time and suffered when the person is faced with a disease. Illness is an inherent process in life, it is up to the family physician to provide relief and comfort not only to patient’s pain, but also quality of life, that is often forgotten.

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines palliative care as care that aims to improve the quality of life of patients and their families, who face problems due to an incurable and/or severe illness and with limited prognosis, through the prevention and relief of suffering through the early identification and rigorous treatment of not only physical problems, including pain, but also of psychological, social and spiritual problems. This definition should not be forgotten, it should be increasingly a motto for those dealing with all age groups, from babies to the elderly person.

Palliative Medicine is to take care, is not letting die, it is providing comfort to the patient and to the family.

We all, doctors, trained academically to diagnose, treat and intervene need to care, to know how to comfort and to act, minimizing the pain of the patient and those around him. It is necessary to recognize early people who will need palliative care, avoiding applying it only in the terminal stages of life, when both physical and psychological suffering took over the patient.

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Palliative care should be a reality, not only at the hospital level, but also in primary care, allowing for early identification of legible people, early intervention and follow-up. More and more patients are informed of the benefit of palliative care, however, we, doctors, must be proactive, informing and referring these patients. There is growing evidence that the involvement of the family physician in the care of their terminally ill patients, influences, in a positive and meaningful way, their lives. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), the involvement of primary care is a key process to make palliative care more precocious, accessible and comprehensive. Being a doctor knows how to diagnose and treat, but also to properly follow patients from the first breath to the final rest.

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Conflict of interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.