



THE KENYA PALLIATIVE CARE POLICY BRIEF

"Towards attaining the highest standards of palliative care"

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Kenya is a signatory to various international and regional treaties, declarations and resolutions that commit governments to ensure access to holistic palliative care services to children and adults at all levels of care. Access to palliative care is increasingly recognized as a component of the human right to health, which is stipulated in the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) Article 12.1 (1996). Kenya's Constitution and legislative framework recognizes the right to health services and emergency medical treatment.

The country is progressing towards Universal Health Coverage which aims to ensure that all Kenyans have access to quality promotive, preventive, curative, rehabilitative and palliative health services without suffering financial hardship.



Caregiver nurse at Kimbilio Hospice

Palliative care is a basic human right and

ensures client-centered quality care with dignity. A strong evidence base exists supporting investment in palliative care proving its impact on **quality of care**, patient **satisfaction** and **reduction of cost of care through prevention of unnecessary and costly health services, particularly hospitalizations.**

Some major considerations for investment in palliative care include allocation of adequate resources to set up more facilities, training of more healthcare providers on palliative care, provision of pain medicines and putting in place policies towards increased and rational access to pain medications.





INTRODUCTIONS

Palliative care is an approach that improves the quality of life of patients with life threatening illnesses and their families through the treatment of pain and other physical, psychosocial and spiritual problems. It prevents and relieves suffering through the **early identification, correct assessment and treatment of pain** and other problems, whether physical, psychosocial or spiritual. When introduced early it can lead to more appropriate and less expensive care.

Worldwide, an estimated 56.8 million people need palliative care annually; 78% of them living in low- and middle-income countries but only a small minority of those in need of such care have access to it resulting in great suffering.

800, 000 Kenyans are in need of palliative care. **14,500** accessed palliative care services in 2019. Less than 5% of children accessed the services.

Evidence shows that limited or lack of palliative care leads to unnecessary unaddressed pain and suffering for patients and their families, strain to the health systems due to frequent unnecessary hospitalisations and financial burden.

Key benefits of palliative care

- ✓ *Improves quality of life*
- ✓ *Reduces hospitalization days*
- ✓ *Prolongs survival*
- ✓ *Reduces avoidable spending*

The rising burden of Non-Communicable and existing infectious disease burden has raised the need for palliative care in Kenya. The need for expansion of access to appropriate, standardized, holistic palliative care for adults and children in Kenya required a national policy to guide proper decision making, goal setting and resource allocation both at the national and county governments.





RECOMMENDATIONS

This policy is anchored on 7 pillars



1 Advocacy and Communication

Promote access to information and awareness on palliative care among all stakeholders.

2 Leadership and Governance

Ensure strategic governance frameworks exist with proper co-ordination, oversight and accountability.



3 Service Delivery

Ensure access to holistic and culturally appropriate palliative care services at all levels of the health care system.



4 Availability and access to essential medicines

Ensure access and affordability of palliative care medicines and commodities at all levels of care.



5 Human Resource and Education

Ensure an adequate, knowledgeable, skilled and motivated health workforce for provision of palliative care services.



6 Health Information Systems and Research

Provide timely, reliable and accessible quality health service information for evidence-based decision-making and research to generate innovative solutions.



7 Healthcare Financing

Mobilize adequate financial resources to facilitate successful implementation, monitoring & evaluation and sustainable provision of palliative care services.



REPUBLIC OF KENYA



MINISTRY OF HEALTH

WHO IS THIS PALLIATIVE CARE POLICY DOCUMENT FOR?

The palliative care policy was developed through consultative meetings with various stakeholders. Through this policy we aim to achieve equity in access to quality palliative care. The policy targets:

- ✓ Policy makers: guidance in health services planning.
- ✓ National and County governments- guidance to integrate and allocate resources for palliative care.
- ✓ Health care workers- empowering palliative care specialists and providers.
- ✓ Persons living with palliative care needs (PWPCNs)- strengthen systems to improve their quality of life and address their needs.
- ✓ Health development partners: support the development of palliative care.
- ✓ Educational Institutions: integrate palliative care into health workers training in diploma, undergraduate and postgraduate levels.
- ✓ General Public – Information and awareness on palliative care provision.

OTHER KEY POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

- ✓ End of life care
- ✓ Advanced Directives/Advanced Care Planning
- ✓ Survivorship
- ✓ Palliative care for special populations such as persons with disabilities, children {neonates and adolescents}, older persons, refugees, displaced persons, inmates, patients with TB and homeless persons.

REFERENCES

- ✓ World Health Organization definition on palliative care:
<https://www.who.int/health-topics/palliative-care>
- ✓ Kenya Cancer Policy 2019-2030:
<https://www.health.go.ke/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Kenya-Cancer-Policy-2020.pdf>
- ✓ Who benefits from palliative care:
<http://www.thewhpc.org/resources/item/global-atlas-of-palliative-care-2nd-ed-2020>

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