A survey on acceptable nomenclature in addressing patient needs among the delegates of a national conference on supportive medicine

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Background: The scope and ambit of services offered in an integrated inpatient palliative medicine unit located in tertiary cancer centre is explored through various questions pertaining to multiple domains encompassing clinical management of advanced cancer patients. The survey tests the attitudes of the respondents while laying the foundation of building and sustaining a novel model where Supportive cancer care services, Pain management and Palliative medicine interventions (including End of life care) are offered as part of a continuum.

Methods: The survey was carried out among the registered delegates of the annual national conference of the Indian Association of Palliative Care.

Results: 48 percent (84/175) felt that Palliative medicine and Supportive oncology are mutually exclusive domains in patient management. 40 percent (71/175) agreed that the terms Palliative medicine and Palliative care are different entities in patient management. 47 percent (96/203) agreed that the term Palliative medicine should be substituted by Supportive medicine while only 22 percent (38/172) agreed that using the term Supportive oncology would be justified in place of Palliative medicine. 34 percent (59/169) felt that substitution of the term Palliative medicine by Supportive oncology might remove the stigma associated with the referral of the patient to avail these services.

Conclusions: These results reflect the multiplicity of views which underlie existing divergent schools of thought in this nascent subspeciality. An indigenous academic model based on the premise of closeknit integration of supportive care and medical oncology which dispels the myth of pure palliation as a segregated entity is the need of the hour. The services offered should reflect the understanding that recognition and management of supportive care needs of cancer patients is of utmost important in making the model economically viable and socially sustainable.

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