

Symptom Management of Patients' with Cancer Cared by a Greek Palliative Home Care Unit

E. Patiraki^{1,2}, S. Katsaragakis², A. Hamou², I. Liakopoulos², Ch. Ikonou², E. Petta², H. Avgetidou², D. Manoli², I. Raimondou², A. Tsatsouli², A. Tserkezoglou²

¹ National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Athens, Greece, ² Galilee Palliative Home Care Unit, Spata, Attica, Greece



Introduction: Galilee is the first palliative home care unit for adult patients with cancer providing care without charge, in a large suburban area of Athens, under the auspices of the Metropolitan of Mesogaia and Lavreotiki.

Objectives: To explore symptom management of cancer patients cared for by Galilee.

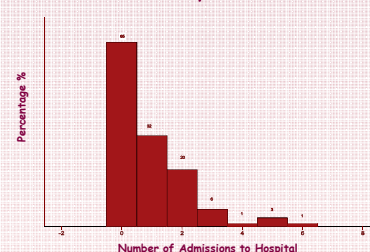
Methods: 128 patients were treated during Galilee's first two years of operation. Retrospective data collection included demographic and clinical characteristics and patients' ESAS-r (Edmond Symptom Assessment System Revised) evaluations of symptoms at time of referral to the service (T₀), one (T₁) and two months later (T₂).

Results

Patients' Demographic & Clinical Data		
	Frequency (n=128)	Percentage (%)
Sex		
Female	69	53.9
Male	59	46.1
Age (mean ± SD) (range) (years)	66.2±12.3 (28-93)	
ECOG (mean ± SD)	2.7±1.3	
Length of Palliative Home Care (mean ± SD) (range) (days)	110.6±109.0 (0-360)	
Number of home visits (mean ± SD) (range)	19.0±18.0 (1-216)	
Patients' Primary Caregiver		
Husband/ Wife	41	32.0
Child	28	21.9
Family member	20	15.6
Mother	9	7.0
Friends	5	3.9
Other	18	4.1

Death Rate and Place of Death		
	Frequency (n=128)	Percentage (%)
Total Number of Deaths	93	72.7
Death Rate per month		
1 st Month	34	27.2
2 nd Month	17	13.6
3 rd Month	13	10.4
4 th Month	5	4.0
>4 Months	24	19.2
Place of Death		
Home	55	58.5
Hospital	33	35.1
Nursing Home	6	6.4

Percentages of Patients Admissions to Hospital During their Care by "Galilee"



Association of Clinical and Demographic Patients' Factors with Death

Controlled Factors	Mean ± SD		p(T ₀ , T ₁)(paired)
	Dead	Alive	
EGOG Performance Status at Admission	3.1±1.0	1.7±1.2	Z=-4.9, p<0.001
Pain at Admission	4.8±3.3	3.7±3.9	Z=-2.4, p=0.017
Tiredness at Admission	5.9±3.3	3.3±3.6	Z=-3.2, p=0.001
Tiredness at 2 nd Month	5.9±3.2	2.6±3.4	Z=-2.6, p=0.008
Lack of appetite at admission	4.6±3.2	7.4±2.7	Z=-3.9, p<0.001
Lack of appetite at 1 st Month	6.0±3.0	7.5±3.0	Z=-2.0, p=0.046
Lack of appetite at 2 nd Month	6.6±2.5	8.4±2.1	Z=-2.7, p=0.007

SD Standard Deviation



Comparison of Patients' Symptoms Assessment between Admission to "Galilee" (T₀), One Month (T₁) and Two Months (T₂) Later

ESAS-r Assessment	Mean ± SD (T ₀)	Mean ± SD (T ₁)	p(T ₀ , T ₁)(paired)	Mean ± SD (T ₂)	p(T ₀ , T ₂)(paired)
Anxiety	6.2±3.5	5.2±3.8	Z=-3.2, p=0.001	5.7±3.7	Z=-3.3, p<0.001
Depression	6.0±3.4	5.6±3.3	Z=-1.2, p=0.221	5.6±3.6	Z=-2.3, p=0.020
Tiredness	5.0±3.6	4.7±3.3	Z=-0.3, p=0.751	4.6±3.8	Z=-0.6, p=0.536
Lack of appetite	4.8±3.3	6.5±3.0	Z=-1.7, p=0.087	7.4±2.5	Z=-2.1, p=0.033
Pain	4.4±3.6	3.9±3.2	Z=-1.6, p=0.120	4.7±3.8	Z=-0.8, p=0.417
Drowsiness	1.8±0.1	1.4±0.4	Z=-1.2, p=0.231	1.8±0.1	Z=-0.9, p=0.379
Shortness of Breath	1.4±1.2	1.3±1.2	Z=-0.5, p=0.645	1.1±1.0	Z=-0.5, p=0.593
Constipation	1.3±0.5	0.9±0.4	Z=-0.1, p=0.899	0.7±0.3	Z=-0.7, p=0.465
Nausea	1.1±1.1	0.8±0.7	Z=-1.0, p=0.378	0.4±0.3	Z=-1.7, p=0.083
Well Being	5.1±2.8	6.0±2.7	Z=-1.4, p=0.157	6.3±2.6	Z=-2.5, p=0.014

SD Standard Deviation

Conclusions: Study results highlight the high prevalence of psychological symptoms of patients (depression and anxiety) and tiredness and that symptom management needs more attention.

Further investigation will explore interventions focused on symptom management.