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**Palliative care medicine:
A balanced approach to opioid
availability and safe use in Kenya**

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Content

- Introduction
- Palliative Care
- Pain management
- What is the problem
- Barriers to Opioid availability
- How did we get here
- What options do we have
- Recommendations

Palliative care

- *Definition:*
- *"A holistic approach to improve the quality of life of patients with incurable disease and their families through the prevention and relief of suffering by means of early identification and careful assessment and treatment of pain and other problems, physical, psychosocial and spiritual"*
- *National cancer control programmes: policies and managerial guidelines. 2nd edition. WHO Geneva (2002)*

What is the problem-

AIDS; Cancer

- Increasing; tremendous burden

○ **Palliative care**

- Necessary part of a public health response to disease

○ **Pain**

- Prevalent; destroys quality of life; can be relieved; poor HCP training; a necessary part of palliative care

○ **Opioids**

- Essential medications; must be accessible; controlled as narcotics; feared; sometimes costly

○ **Government**

- Strict laws and regulation; variable understanding of need and risks



Pain management drugs

- The WHO analgesic ladder
- Narcotics -essential drugs
- Morphine – moderate to severe pain
- Low availability and lack of access to narcotics.
- Low consumption- world drug report and INCB reports-figures for Kenya (INCB- global consumption figures for Africa 2004)

Barriers to opioids use in Kenya

- **Legislation-** (Cap 245- changes in 1994) - punitive law has made the drug distributors and pharmacist shy away from stocking these drugs for fear of violation of the law.
- **Inadequate knowledge** on use of opioids amongst healthcare professionals. **Fear of addiction** to users influence healthcare professionals not to prescribe these drugs.
- **Policies** that inappropriately or excessively regulate the medical use of controlled substances, in particular, the opioids that are essential in pain management.
- **Lack of data- few studies done on pain!**
- **Price-** Taxation of morphine increases its price which further hinders its accessibility.



INCB urges Kenya

- ECOSOC Resolution 2005/25
- Medical use of narcotic drugs is indispensable for the relief of pain and suffering
- Morphine a narcotic under controlled should be available at all times in adequate amounts and appropriate dosage forms for the relief of severe pain
- Low national consumption of opioids is a matter of great concern



Balanced approach

WHO advocates for a balance approach between **education of health care professionals**, presence of **appropriate regulation and legislation** to improve **drug availability** and government policy addressing the adherence to national policy to alleviate chronic cancer pain.

- While these measures are critical to a **public health approach for palliative care**, in many parts of Africa they are simply not in place.



The principle of Balance

- Opioids safe and effective, essential medicines; availability must be ensured
- Opioids have potential for abuse; control system needed to prevent diversion
- Efforts to address abuse and diversion must not interfere with availability for medical practice and patient care.

KEHPCA Lobbies for improved access to Palliative care medicine

- Government policy – emphasizing on need to alleviate chronic cancer pain
- Education – of public, health care professionals, policy makers, drug regulators
- Drug availability and accessibility- appropriate legislation/regulations, improvement in prescribing, distributing, dispensing and administration of drugs.

Key Players: Action

- MOH/ Department of Pharmacy/Division of NCD : cancer policy was to be ready 2007, Status?
- Lobby groups –APCA, KEHPCA 2006,Opioid task force 2007-2008.
- MOH PPB -Legislation- Amendments to the act
- Education- Curriculum changes, Universities and professional societies- CMEs/CPD
- KEHPCA -Training 2008- Free distance learning course – <http://www.nhppco.org>
- Professional societies-Networking
- KEMSA- PPB, Hospice, NASCOP, Hospitals -data on consumption

How does we in PSK plan to deal with:

- Acceptance of the Kenyan essential drugs list, including opioids e.g. morphine
- Regulations allowing ready access to opioids for all patients in need
- Licensing & training of nurses & other primary care professionals on the application of essential drugs
- Affordable pricing by the pharmaceutical industry
- Logistic plan for equitable in-country distribution?

Way Forward

- Revision of the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act to include licit control part and improve access of these drugs.
- Formulation of new policies that ensure adequate regulation of use of narcotics but at the same time encourage their legitimate use.
- Aggressive education of both the public and healthcare professionals on the use of opioids and de-stigmization of opioids as drugs of abuse.



Take home message

- Understanding the Relationship between Pain and Drug Control Policy
- The Role of International and National Law and Organizations
- Barriers to Opioid Availability and Access
- WHO Guidelines to Evaluate National Opioids Control Policy
- WHO Guidelines to Evaluate National Administrative Systems for Estimating Opioid Requirements and Reporting Consumption Statistics
- WHO Guidelines on Procurement and Distribution Systems for Opioid Analgesics
- All of us can position to make palliative care accessible and safe in Kenya.



To End

- Thank you for listening