Palliative Care

Improving Quality of Life in a Serious Illness Like Cancer

CANSUPPORT
Caring For People with Cancer
PALLIATIVE CARE is specialized medical care for people with a serious illness like cancer. It is focused on providing relief from pain, symptoms and stress related to the illness. Its goal is to improve quality of life for both the patient and the family and make day to day life comfortable.

Palliative care is provided by a specially-trained team of doctors, nurses, counselors and other specialists who work together with patients and families to provide an extra layer of support. It is effective at any age and at any stage in a serious illness and can be provided along with curative treatment.

LEADERS IN HOME BASED PALLIATIVE CARE SINCE 1996

AWARDED BY WORLD HEALTH ORGANISATION

The content for this booklet was developed by Lily Zhang, a Princeton University intern during the summer of 2016 with guidance from Dr Reena Sharma, Head of Palliative Care Field Services under the supervision of Rajni B. Arora, volunteer member of the communication team at CanSupport, supported by Dr Parul Jain and Nilima Chawla, volunteers, CanSupport.

Illustrations © Tina Rajan, volunteer, CanSupport

Information provided on this booklet has been compiled from various sources in the public domain. Please contact our cancer telephone helpline for further information on cancer or cancer related services.
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CANCER HELPLINE
41010539, 9899011212
Monday to Friday, 9:30 AM to 5:30 PM
That should be the last thing you need to worry about, Anita. Your health is way more important. What's going to happen, Sapna? I don't know what to do now. I'm worried about my family. How do I tell them?

When my mother was first diagnosed, I remember feeling very fearful too, but a friend referred us to CanSupport. They are experts in palliative care.

Oh, sorry. I forget how often people don't know what it is! Palliative care includes medical care, nursing, and counseling for people with life-threatening illnesses and their families.

CanSupport's home care teams can provide information and help manage pain and the side-effects of medication through different stages of the sickness—not just for the patient but also for the patient's family members.

Wait, wait. What do you mean? What is palliative care??

I don't know if I can afford the fees though…

CanSupport provides all of its services free of charge! You can start by calling their telephone helpline.

Oh, okay. I'll give it a try then.

Let me know how it goes!

Scene 1: The Hospital Visit

This is Anita… Anita is a mother taking care of her son and elderly parent. She has just been to the hospital for a checkup as she has been feeling tired and has also been losing weight.

Sapna? Hey… Are you okay? What did the report say?

The doctor says I have cancer.

Oh, my dear. I'm so sorry.

No, I'm the one who is sorry. Your wedding is in two months! And I was supposed to help you plan.

Sapna is Anita's best friend, and her wedding is set for an auspicious day—two months from now. Anita was looking forward to helping her friend plan the special occasion.
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Scene 2: The First Home Visit

The next day, Anita calls CanSupport, and they arrange for Counselor Karuna to visit her home.

Counselor, thank you so much for coming.

How are you feeling?

I’m really scared. I don’t know why this is happening to me. I don’t know if I can afford treatment. There’s so much uncertainty, and I just have so many questions...

How do I tell my family? My mom is already worried.

It’s okay. Take a deep breath. I’m here to support you.

They need to know about this in order to best support you. Your mom will be worried, but not telling her would worry her even more. Speaking about your family... I think I hear someone at the door.
Scene 3

RAHUL IS ANITA'S SON. HE HAS JUST LEARNED WHAT "CANCER" IS IN SCHOOL AND IS SHOCKED TO SEE THE CAN SUPPORT VAN OUTSIDE THE HOUSE.

Nani! Are you okay? Where’s Mommy?

I’m fine, Rahul. Mommy is inside talking to a visitor.

Nani, who’s the visitor? Does Mommy have cancer?! Is that why the van is here?

No, no... I think she said it was a counselor from a place called... Umm... I don't remember.

Doesn’t cancer mean she’s going to die? (voice getting louder, eyes becoming teary) Did I do something wrong to give Mommy cancer? (starts crying)

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I understand how you must be feeling. It’s definitely hard news to accept. But the most important thing right now is to give Anita all the care and support possible.

Why do we need CanSupport though? Isn’t palliative care for end-of-life patients? Anita isn’t dying! (looks angry) She’s going to be fine. Mom… let Counselor Karuna explain.

I know Anita is a strong woman, and she has loving family members who will take good care of her, but the treatment is hard. Palliative care will offer relief from pain and the side effects of the treatment without interfering with it. It’s also free of charge, mom. I think they can help us.

If you say so…

Do you have any other questions? I’m afraid to ask this… How much time do I have? My best friend’s wedding is in two months…

It will depend on how you respond to the treatment. Your cancer treatment will start soon, but you might still be able to attend the wedding.

Mommy! Please don’t be sick! I know what I did was wrong!! It was an accident!! I found where you hid the toffee jar. On the top shelf!! I dropped it when I was trying to put it back though, and the jar broke… I didn’t tell you because I knew you would get angry at me for wanting to eat more sweets!

Rahul… what did you do…?

Hi Rahul, I’m Counselor Karuna. I’m here to help your mother feel better. Don’t worry, she’s not sick because of what you did.

Oh Rahul…

But I promise I’ll be good now! Mommy, why is she here?

So she really is sick? Are the doctors sure it’s cancer? Maybe they’re wrong… Anita has always been healthy. Even as a child, she rarely got sick.
I understand how you must be feeling. It's definitely hard news to accept. But the most important thing right now is to give Anita all the care and support possible.

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Rahul... what did you do...?
Scene 4: The Second Visit

A week has passed.

For the second visit, Counselor Karuna arrives with the other members of her team: Doctor Ashish and Nurse Shanti.

Hi Anita, I’m Doctor Ashish, and this is Nurse Shanti. We’ll be visiting you often along with Counselor Karuna. You can call us at anytime if you are in pain or need help.

How are you feeling, dear? You do look a bit pale.

You look a bit pale. Is something worrying you?

Well, my supervisor at the factory called yesterday. She said I should stop coming to work, as they don’t want to be held responsible for any additional injury or risks.

She did?! Oh that woman… I must have forgotten…

What are we going to do now? We’re already worrying about paying for your treatment.

Maybe I could get a job to help out…

Our social welfare officers might be able to help you find funds for the treatment. I also know a local garment factory that lets you work from home.

Maybe Nani can also help with that.

Oh yes, that would be great!

God… why me? Why now? What did I do?

You haven’t done anything wrong, dear. Anyone can get cancer.

You don’t take care of yourself well enough, AND you worry too much. Worrying makes you sick.

But Nani, mommy is already sick…

Oh mom, I should be the one saying that to you! You worry more than I do!

Well, I’m not the one sick right now!

Mommy, Nani, I’m hungry.

Let’s go eat something instead of arguing…

Shh, God hasn’t left you. He loves you and so do we. You are not alone. We’re all here to support you, How could He have left when you have so many people who care for you?

How could He have left you when you have so many people who care for you?

It makes me feel as though God has forsaken me. I feel so alone.

The atmosphere of the room is a lot lighter as they all head to the dining room.
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Oh yes, that would be great!
Scene 5: The Third Visit

The following week, the home care team receives a call from Anita. She has just finished her first chemotherapy session and would like to see the home care team.

Oh thank goodness you are here! Anita is not feeling well. She’s been in bed ever since we got back from the chemo.

Okay, we’ll take care of her. Come, and we’ll show you which medications to give her.

Mommy said she was tired, so I’m reading her a story.

Good boy. We’re going to interrupt the story for a second, okay?

How was the chemo?

I felt okay during the session, but once we got home, I felt really tired and nauseous. My back pain also got worse.

Okay, so we’re going to give you some medications for the nausea and pain. Hopefully it’ll help you feel better. Make sure to follow the correct dosage!

Maybe Nani can help remember the different pills and dosages?

Of course, I’d love to help.

Mom, are you sure? You’re pretty forgetful…

I can help Nani! I’ll write it down!

Okay Rahul.

Rahul has been so helpful and obedient ever since my diagnosis. It really makes me happier.

I’m so happy to hear that.

The only thing I can’t control is how hungry I get! I actually finished the whole packet of biscuits yesterday…

Mom, you’re forgetting again… We don’t have a sewing machine.

Really? That’s so kind of you… Thank you so much.

Oh… I just realized something…

What is it?

Maybe my supervisor is also afraid… A lot of people still think cancer is contagious or that the patient needs to be avoided because their hair starts to fall out, and people don’t understand why. I worry about what I am going to do when my hair begins to fall.

We need to be patient and understanding of others’ ignorance. They don’t mean any harm. But, let’s look at the bright side. Have you considered getting a stylish haircut?

What do you mean?

Since your treatment starts next week, we might as well have some fun with your hair right now! Try a hairstyle that you would never have gotten otherwise.

I haven’t thought of that! I’ve always wanted a bob haircut—

precisely because my mom always said it looked terrible.

Well, we can try that now!
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The only thing I can’t control is how hungry I get! I actually finished the whole packet of biscuits yesterday...
Anita dear, are you feeling alright?

I… I don’t know. You guys have been more than generous in helping me solve my problems, and I don’t want to sound ungrateful.

You can tell us how you feel. We’re here to help in any way, remember?

I feel embarrassed of the way I look. I used to have such long hair. All the girls were going to do up their hair with lots of flowers for Sapna’s wedding. I feel different from them now.

You’re not different; you’re special! You could always purchase a wig, or you could cover it with a pretty headscarf like this one.

I can help you to wear it stylishly!
Wow Mommy, you look really pretty!

Thank you all for cheering me up.

Sapna is my best friend though, and I had really wanted to make this special for her.

Your presence will be the best gift.

But...I'm also worried that the present I bring won't be as good as what others bring. I really can't afford an extravagant present right now.

A gift's worth is not in its monetary value. What matters most is that the present comes from the heart, as I'm sure it is.

We understand. You need a reminder here and there, and that's what we're here for.

You'll get to see Sapna on her big day, and I'm sure she'll be very happy to see you feeling better.

Yes, you're right... It's just hard to be optimistic with all that has happened.

Thank you for taking care of me all this time. I don't know how I would have gotten through all these problems without your team.

It's our pleasure!
Scene 7: Sapna's Wedding

TODAY IS SAPNA'S WEDDING. ANITA AND HER FAMILY HAVE ARRIVED AT THE VENUE. ANITA LOOKS A BIT FEARFUL BUT MOSTLY HAPPY. NANI IS WALKING SLOWLY WITH HER. RAHUL HAS ALREADY HEADED FOR THE TABLE HEAPED WITH DESSERTS.

Your head scarf is so pretty!

Yes! You must teach us how to tie it like that!

How are you doing?

Come, come, there's a seat for you here.

Sapna! You look so beautiful!

Oh Anita! I am so happy to see you.

The flowers are so pretty! This is amazing! I can't believe you took the time to do this despite your treatment.

I wouldn't have missed your special day for anything. I hope you like this table set. I embroidered the edges myself.
Well, it wouldn’t have been possible without CanSupport’s home care team. I still need to thank you for referring me to them!

I’m really glad you reached out to them. They were such a help for my family, and I’m thankful they were able to help you too.

Me too... Wait, where’s Rahul?

Haha, let him eat as much as he wants today!

Oh okay fine... I guess today is a special occasion.

Anita and Sapna laugh merrily, and Anita looks happier than she has in a long time. For a while, it seems that the cancer has been forgotten, and Anita can do what she wants to do without fear or anxiety. And that’s what we all strive for right? A little extra life in our days.
Hi there, readers! If you’re like my Nani, you might need a few extra reminders after reading this comic!

Hi there, child! What are you saying?

What are you saying, child? I can remember perfectly well.

Hmmm okay. What is palliative care, Nani?

I can remember perfectly well.

I know now that it’s not end-of-life care. And it means that we focus more on the patient than the disease! And...

What is palliative care, Nani?

And like Nani said, palliative care doesn’t mean end-of-life care! CanSupport’s home care teams are there to look after the patient through all stages of the illness.

You can reach out at any time for yourself or for a loved one. Contact the CanSupport Helpline for more information at +91 11 41010539 or email them at helpline@cansupport.org. They can help answer your questions or refer you to a survivor who can provide more personal insights.

I could have said all that...

Thank you for reading our story! I hope it brought you some comfort.
Epilogue

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I can remember perfectly well.

Hmmm okay.

What is palliative care, Nani?

I know now that it’s not end-of-life care. And it means that we focus more on the patient than the disease! And...

Rahul, stop making fun of your Nani!

Palliative care includes medical and nursing care as well as psychological and emotional support for the patient and family members. CanSupport’s services can be accessed through their daycare centers, their outpatient clinics, or their home care teams.

And like Nani said, palliative care doesn’t mean end-of-life care!

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DAYCARE
We run three Day Care sessions every week for cancer patients under treatment. We offer them recreational and art therapies to de-stress them.

OUTPATIENT CLINIC
The clinics facilitate early intervention of palliative care in the cancer trajectory, enabling improved patient outcomes and continuity of care.

TELEPHONE HELPLINE
We have trained counsellors always available to listen to patients and provide them emotional and psycho-social support. We also facilitate financial help.

WHAT CAN SUPPORT DOES

FREE HOME BASED PALLIATIVE CARE
We have trained doctors, nurses and counsellors who visit cancer patients in their homes to provide palliative care services.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

VOLUNTEER
We can’t run our services without our volunteers. No special skill is required, all you need is aptitude and empathy.

DONATE
To help as many people as possible, we need your donations to support our work. All our services are free of charge to the patients. Contact Navdha @ 95995 58368.

EVENTS AND SPONSORSHIPS
We organize annual events to raise awareness about cancer and raise funds for our programs. Your support in our events will help us to maximize our reach.

REFERS SOMEONE
If you or someone you know could benefit from the services of CanSupport, call our helpline on 41040539, 9899011212.

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CANSUPPORT
PALLIATIVE CARE PROGRAMS IN 4 STATES IN INDIA

PUNJAB
3 Teams
Amritsar
Gurdaspur
Bhatinda

HARYANA
4 Teams
Faridabad
Gurgaon
Palwal

DELHI
20 Teams
All 11 districts

UP
4 Teams
Ghaziabad
Gautam Budh Nagar
Greater Noida
Meerut

Head Office,
Palliative Care and Training Centre
A-2, Gulmohar Park, New Delhi - 110049
Contact No: 011-41010537

Amritsar Centre:
Amritsar Sewa Samiti,
Beri Gate Hospital,
Inner Circular Road,
Beri Gate Amritsar-143001
Contact no: 9501887956

Bhatinda Centre:
Booth No. 6, Near Tulip Club
Ganpati Enclave, Dabawali Road,
Bhatinda- 151001
Contact no: 9315905178

Meerut Centre:
A-18, Surya Nagar
Behind LIC Building,
Meerut - 250001
Contact No:- 8826576722

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Meerut +91 8826576722

For more information visit us on www.cansupport.org
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