

# Palliative Care

IMPROVING QUALITY OF LIFE IN A SERIOUS ILLNESS LIKE CANCER



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

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**LEADERS IN HOME BASED PALLIATIVE CARE SINCE 1996  
AWARDED BY WORLD HEALTH ORGANISATION**



## **DID YOU KNOW?**

**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.**



**CANCER HELPLINE**

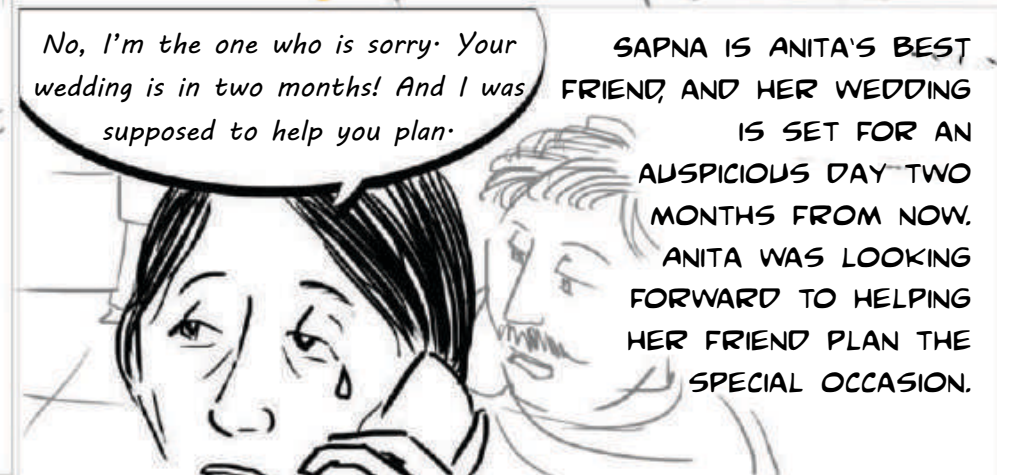
**41010539, 9899011212**

**Monday to Friday, 9:30 AM to 5:30 PM**



# 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.



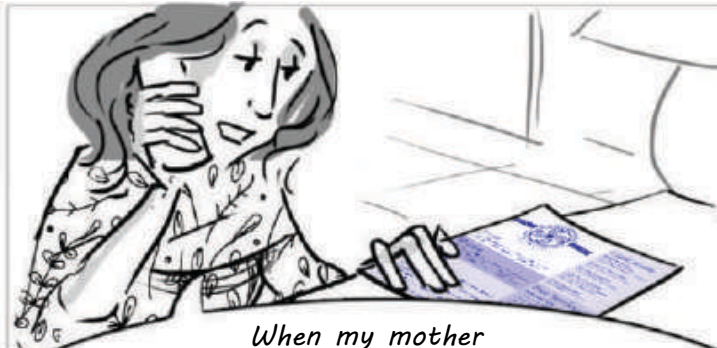
SAPNA IS ANITA'S BEST FRIEND, AND HER WEDDING IS SET FOR AN AUSPICIOUS DAY TWO MONTHS FROM NOW. ANITA WAS LOOKING FORWARD TO HELPING HER FRIEND PLAN THE SPECIAL OCCASION.



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.



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



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.

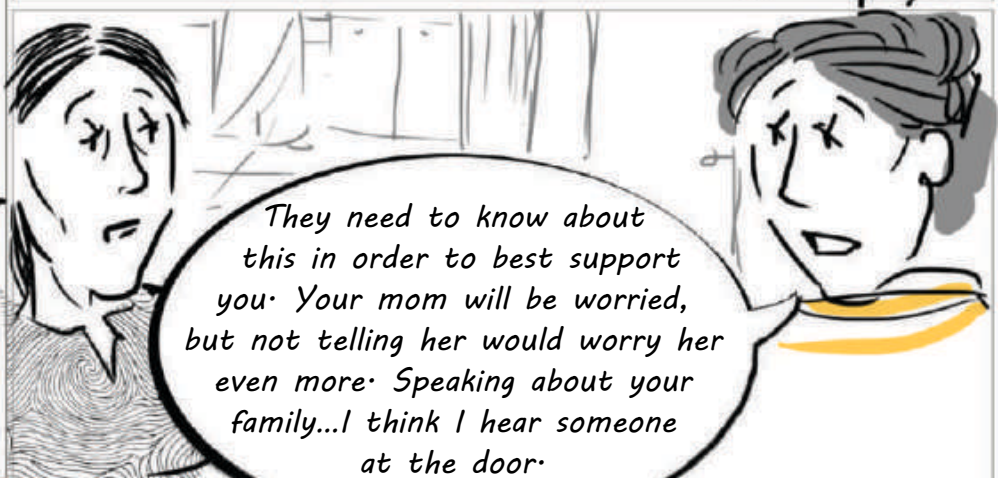
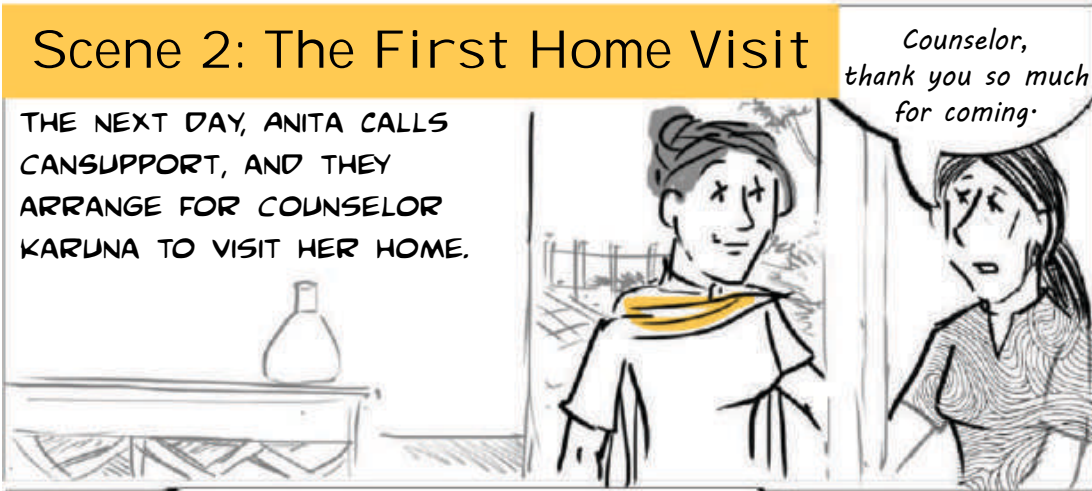


Let me know how it goes!



## Scene 2: The First Home Visit

THE NEXT DAY, ANITA CALLS CANSUPPORT, AND THEY ARRANGE FOR COUNSELOR KARUNA TO VISIT HER HOME.





## Scene 3

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



Nani! Are you okay? Where's Mommy?

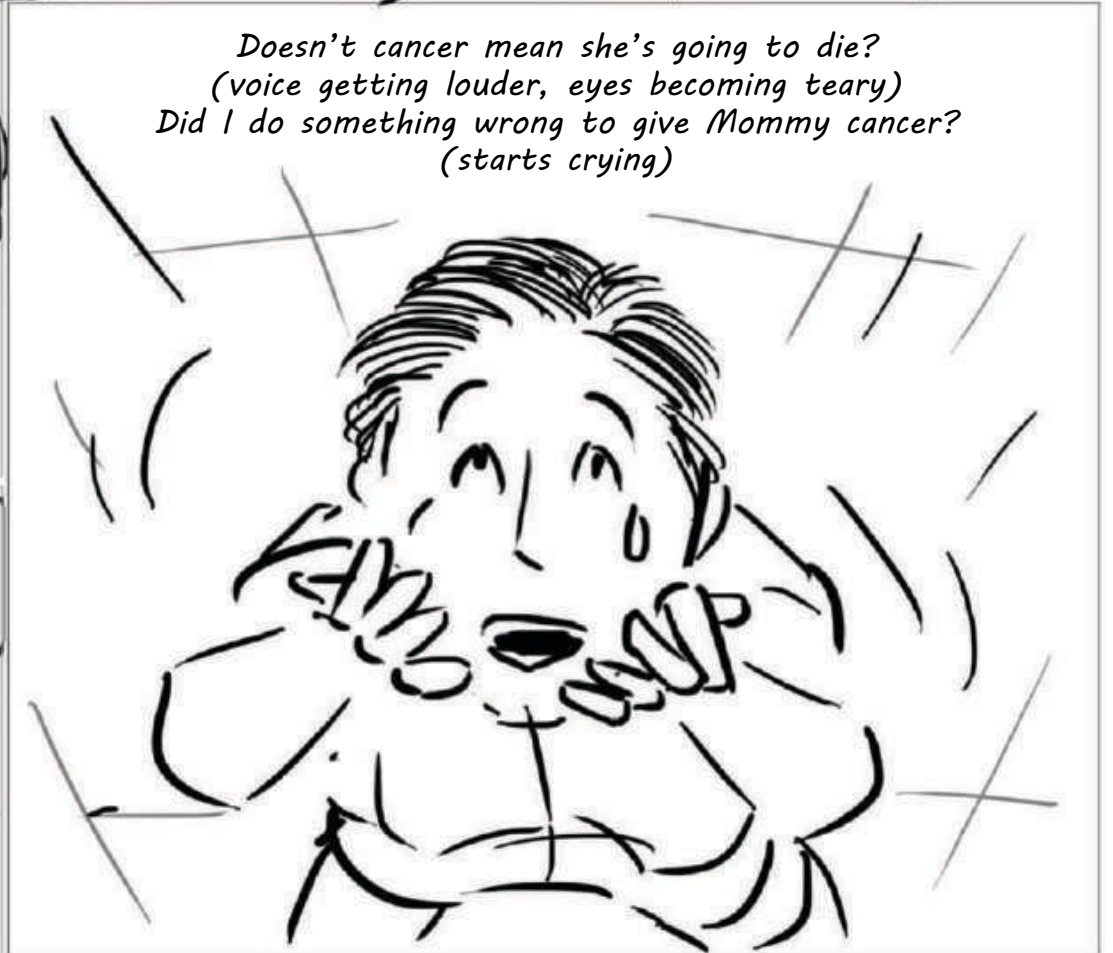
I'm fine, Rahul. Mommy is inside talking to a visitor.



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



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)



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



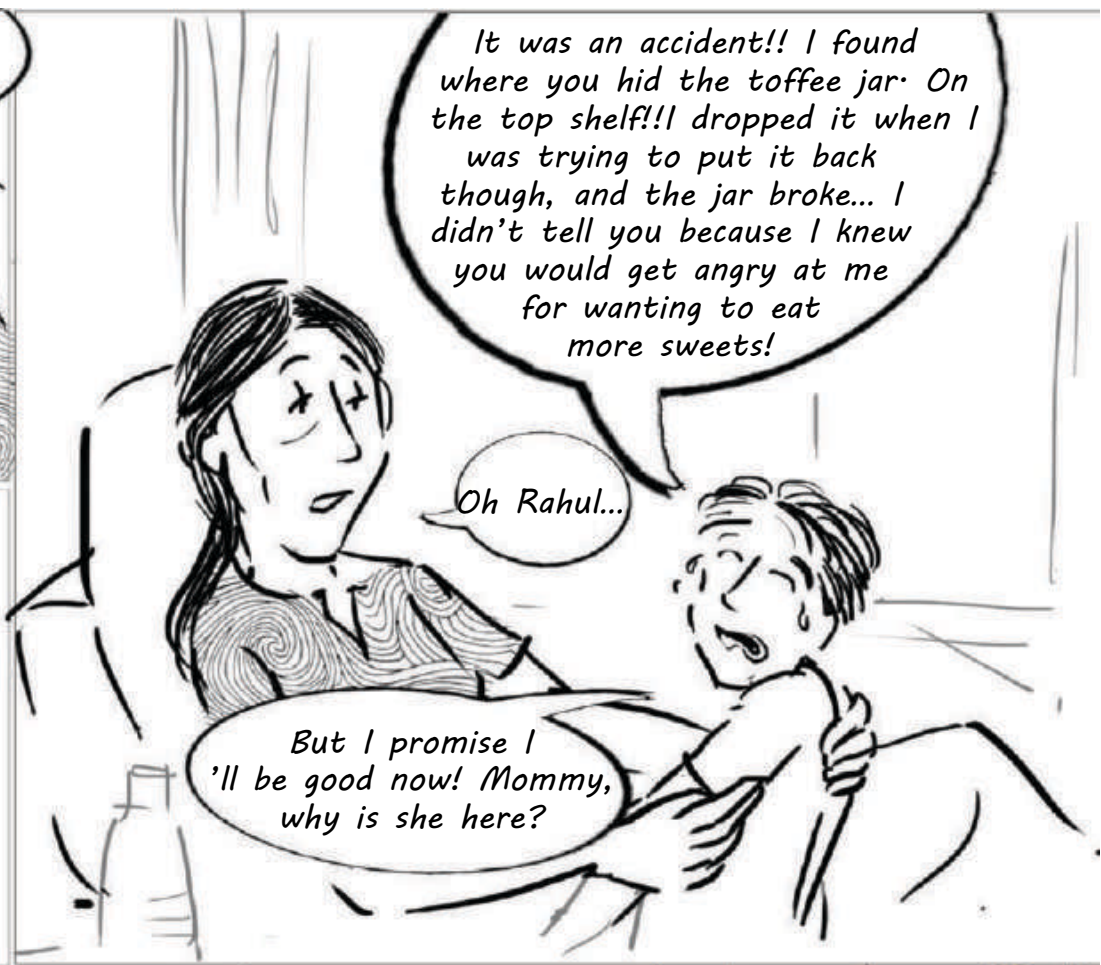




Mommy! Please don't be sick!  
I know what I did was wrong!!



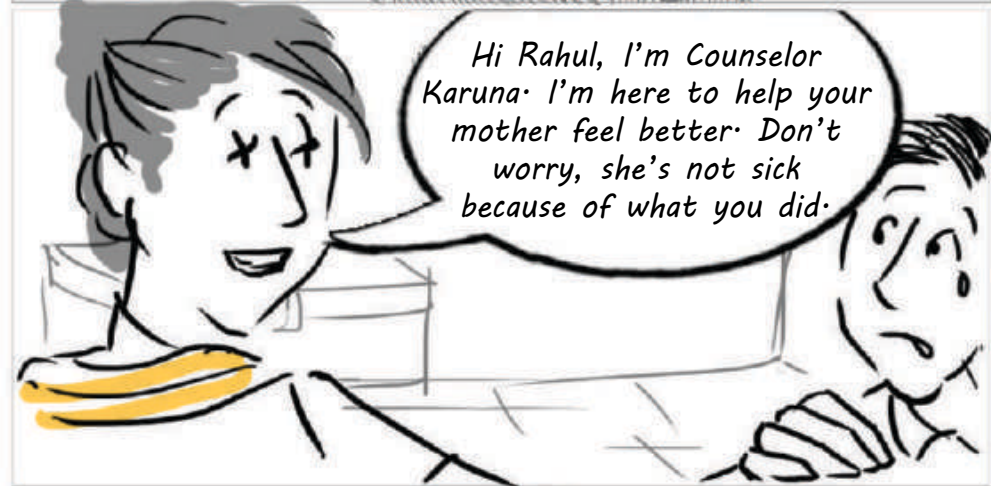
Rahul... what did  
you do...?



Oh Rahul...

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!

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

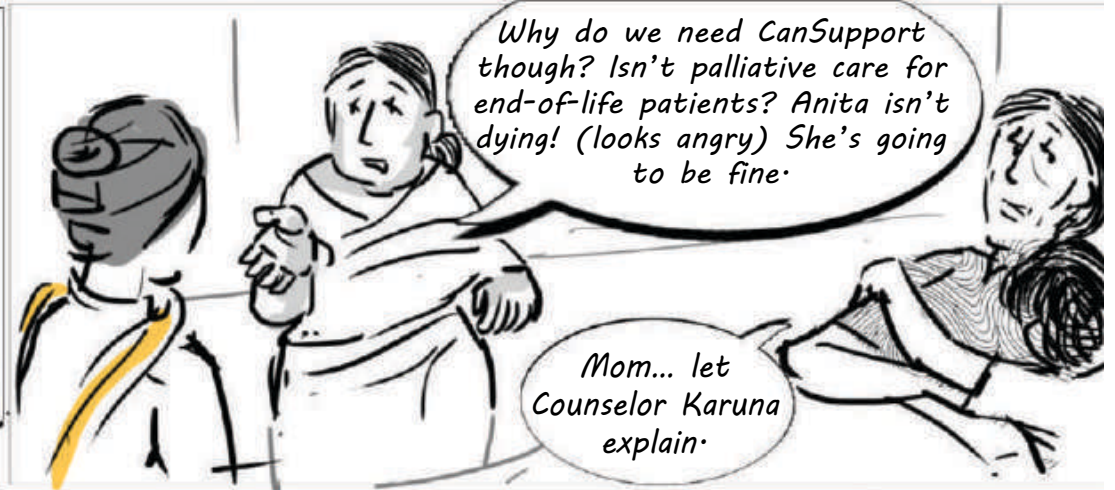


Hi Rahul, I'm Counselor  
Karuna. I'm here to help your  
mother feel better. Don't  
worry, she's not sick  
because of what you did.



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.









God...why me? Why now? What did I do?

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

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



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?



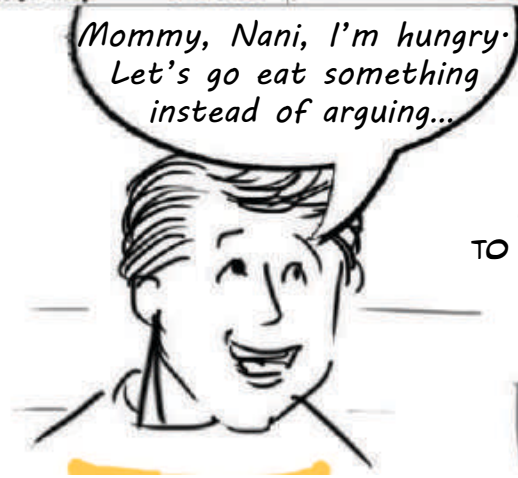
You don't take care of yourself well enough, AND you worry too much. Worrying makes you sick.



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...

THE ATMOSPHERE OF THE ROOM IS A LOT LIGHTER AS THEY ALL HEAD TO THE DINING ROOM.



## 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 look a bit pale.

You do 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!





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

We can also try  
to provide you with a  
sewing machine! I can check  
if we can find someone  
to donate or fund a  
machine for you.



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—

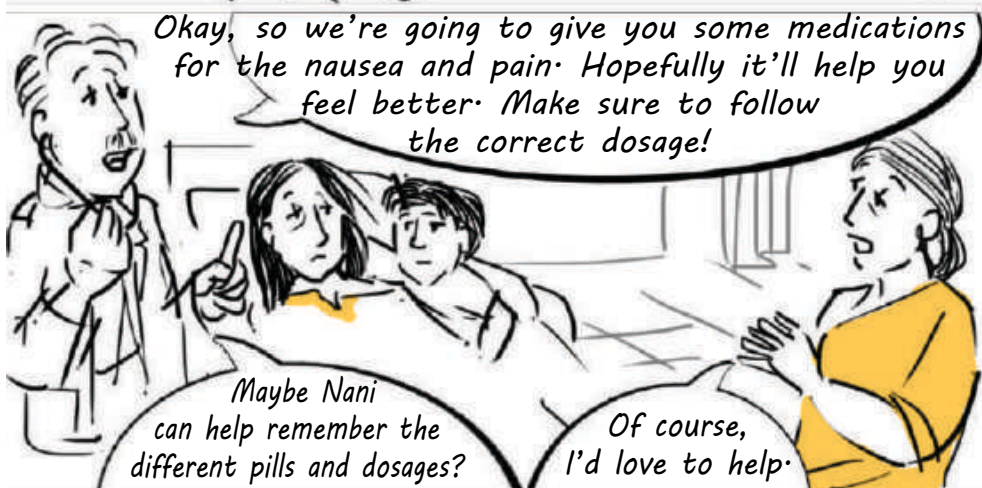
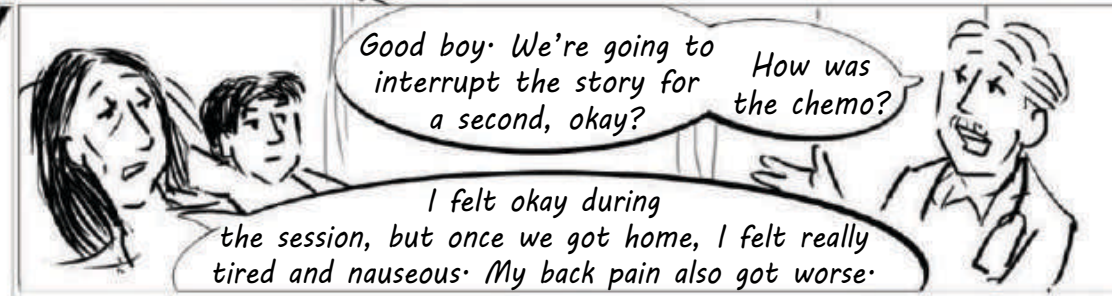
precisely because  
my mom always said  
it looked terrible.

Well, we can  
try that now!



## Scene 5: The Third Visit

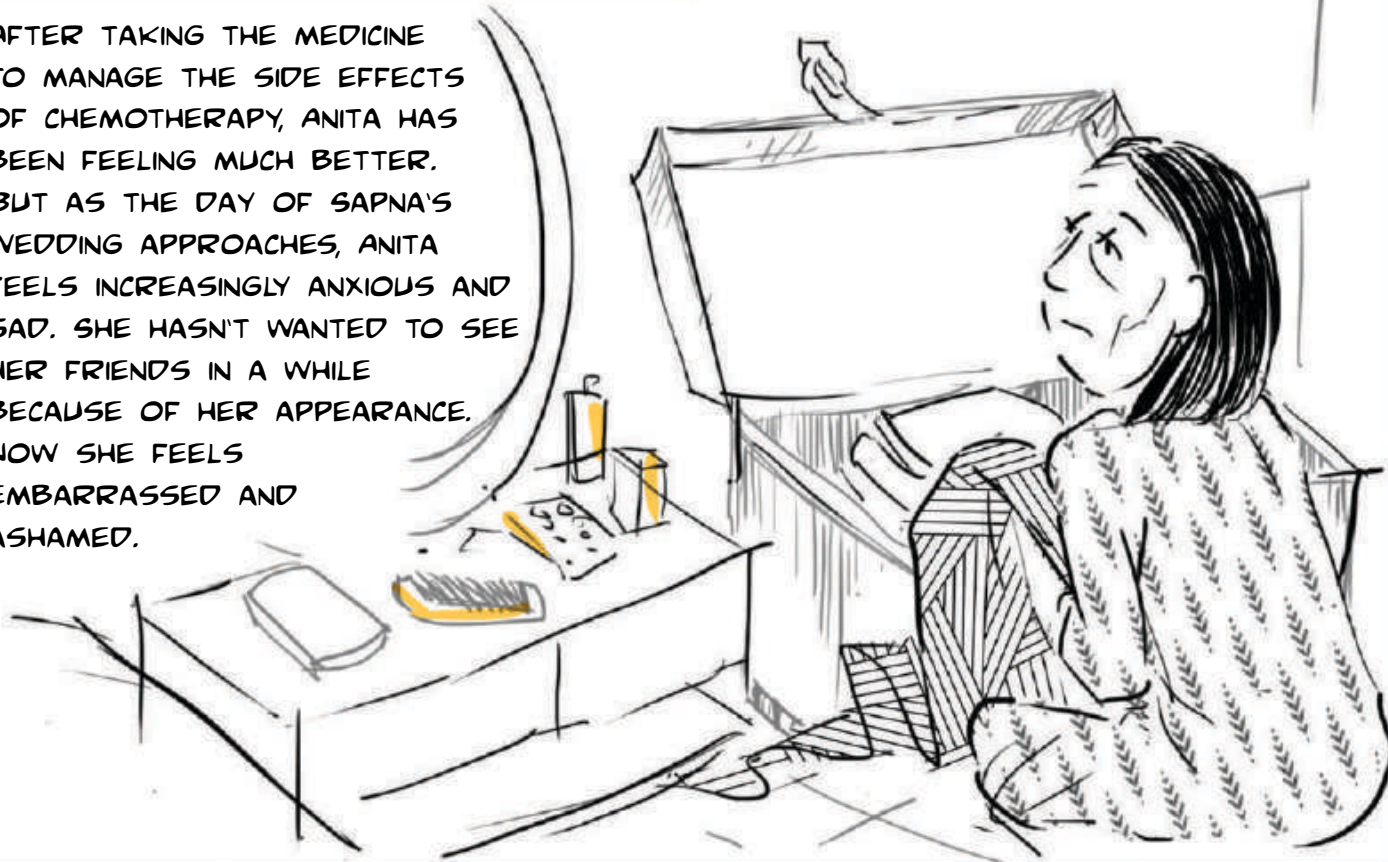
THE FOLLOWING WEEK, THE HOME CARE TEAM RECEIVES A CALL FROM ANITA. SHE HAS JUST FINISHED HER FIRST CHEMOTHERAPY SESSION AND WOULD LIKE TO SEE THE HOME CARE TEAM.





## Scene 6: The Fourth Visit

AFTER TAKING THE MEDICINE TO MANAGE THE SIDE EFFECTS OF CHEMOTHERAPY, ANITA HAS BEEN FEELING MUCH BETTER. BUT AS THE DAY OF SAPNA'S WEDDING APPROACHES, ANITA FEELS INCREASINGLY ANXIOUS AND SAD. SHE HASN'T WANTED TO SEE HER FRIENDS IN A WHILE BECAUSE OF HER APPEARANCE. NOW SHE FEELS EMBARRASSED AND ASHAMED.



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.



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.



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



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.



Your presence will be the best gift.

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!



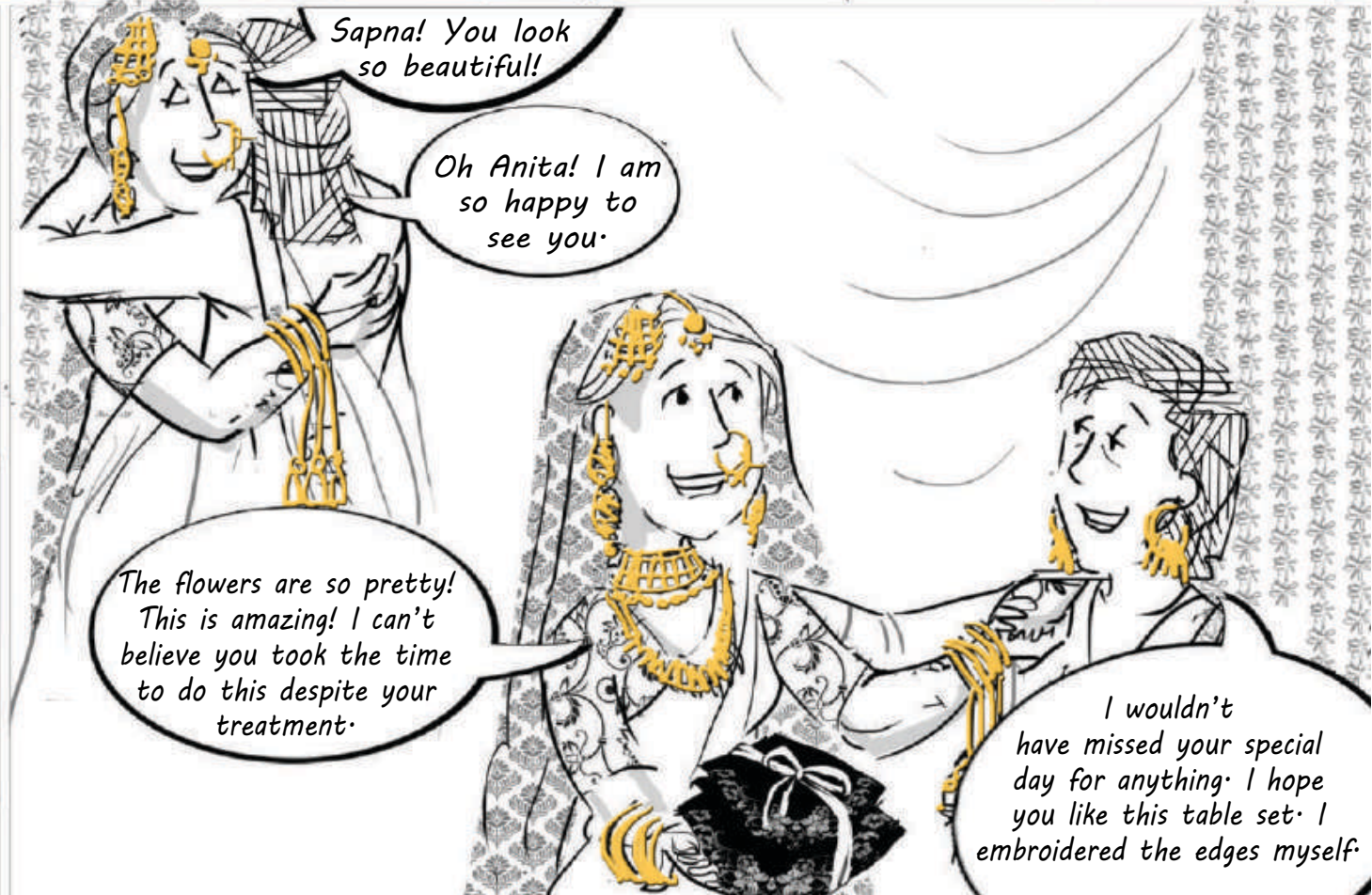
## Scene 7: Sapna's Wedding

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!



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.



How are you doing?

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



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? 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.



## Epilogue

Hi there, readers! If you're like my Nani, you might need a few extra reminders after reading this comic!



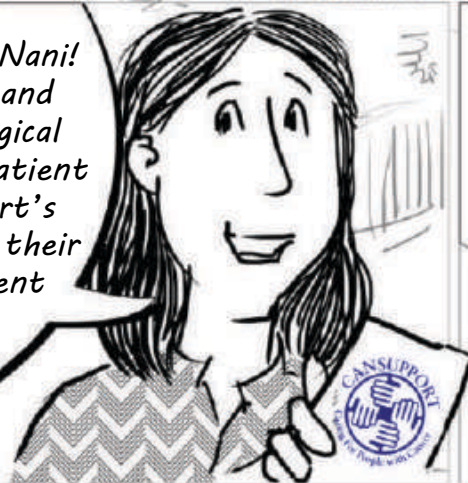
What are you saying, child? I can remember perfectly well.

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! 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](mailto: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.



## 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.

### 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 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

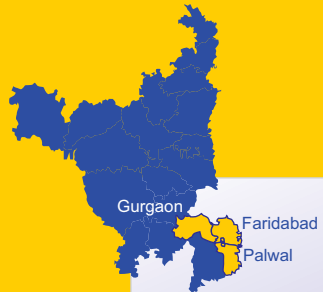
If you or someone you know could benefit from the services of CanSupport, call our helpline on 41040539, 9899011212



# 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

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

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



**CANCER HELPLINE**  
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 +91 9899011212  
 Amritsar +91 9501887956  
 Bhatinda +91 9315905178  
 Meerut +91 8826576722

For more information visit us on [www.cansupport.org](http://www.cansupport.org)

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