

Opioids, Getting the Balance Right

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The World Health Organization reported that the global cancer burden is estimated to have risen to 18.1 million new cases and 9.6 million deaths in 2018. One in 5 men and one in 6 women worldwide develop cancer during their lifetime, and one in 8 men and one in 11 women die from the disease. Worldwide, the total number of people who are alive within 5 years of a cancer diagnosis, called the 5-year prevalence, is estimated to be 43.8 million. These reported in the developing part of the world, including Asia, Africa, Central and South America. Cancer survival rate is poorer in developing countries due to diagnosis at late stage and limited access to timely treatment. Since the disease *per se* cannot be treated even with the best available treatment modalities, what remains important is symptom management and providing comfort care to these patients. The incidence of pain in advanced stages of cancer approaches 70–80%. Lack of preventive strategies, poverty, illiteracy, and social stigma are the biggest cause of pain suffering and patient presenting in advance stage of their disease. The need for palliative care is expanding due to aging of world's population and increase in the rate of cancer in developed and developing countries. A huge gap remains between demand and current palliative care services. Overcoming barriers to palliative care is a major global health agenda that need immediate attention. Main causes of inadequate pain relief remain lack of knowledge among physician and patients, lack of adequate supply of opioids and other drugs for pain relief, strong bureaucracy involved in terms of procurement, and dispensing of opioids. Beside this, poverty and illiteracy remain the most important factors of increased suffering