CONFERENCE ABSTRACT

Awareness of the general population about palliative care in Croatia
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Zlata Ožvačić Adžić[1,2]

1: University of Zagreb, School of Medicine, Department of Family Medicine, Zagreb, Croatia

2: Zagreb - Centar Health Center, Zagreb

Introduction

Palliative care (PC) has been recognized as a public health priority by the World Health Organisation, with most governments acknowledging PC within their public health strategies. However, awareness of PC among general population is less than optimal and varies substantialy. In order to obtain full implementation of PC policies it is essential to understand public views and knowledge related to PC. An international study in Slovenia, Croatia, Austria and Hungary is being conducted with the aim to assess the level of awareness and understanding of PC among general public. The methodology and expected descriptive results of Croatian arm of the study will be presented.

Methods

A community-based cross sectional survey covering four Croatian regions on a population of individuals aged 18+ years will be performed in the period January-March 2020. Information on awareness and understanding of PC will be collected using a self-administered questionnaire used in previous studies, adapted for the purpose of this study by Slovenian investigators. A Slovenian version of the questionnaire has been translated to Croatian (forward-backward translation process, pilot-testing, cultural adaptation, consensus on the final version). A sample of 1200 patients attending their family physicians (FPs) during the study period will be invited to participate in the study (sample of 385 required to provide confidence level of 95%) and offered to fill the online or paper version of the questionnaire. A reminder will be sent in two weeks.

Descriptive statistics will be performed regarding distribution of responses to each question, with chi-square being used where appropriate to determine the association between socio-demographic variables and outcomes of interest. Data will be analyzed using statistical software IBM SPSS, version 20.

Results (work in progress)

It is expected that public awareness of PC in Croatia will be suboptimal, with sociodemographic characteristics being correlated to variability in levels of awareness. The most common sources of information related to PC are expected to be close family or friends receiving PC. Preffered place of PC and preferred site of dying are expected to be the person's own home. A number of priorities in terms of patient recieving PC and their family members from public perspective will be indentified.

Discussion

The existing literature on public awareness and understanding of PC and its availability in the community has suggested variable and mostly inadequate awareness of PC among the general public, which represents a barrier for effective and appropriate PC implementation.

Conclusions

In order to improve knowledge and empower individuals for utilization of PC services, enchanced understanding of PC principles and services by general public is needed.

Lessons learned

The existing knowledge and attitudes as well as percieved priorities regarding PC among the general public in Croatia will be identified.

Limitations

The convenient study sample consisting of individuals attending FPs may not full represent the general adult population in Croatia.

Suggestions for future research

Future research should focus on implementation of strategies to increase public awareness and understanding of PC through educational acitivities in the community.