
CONFERENCE ABSTRACT

Attitudes and knowledge about palliative care among citizens of Croatia: a case study of two cities with and without established palliative care service

ICIC20 Virtual Conference – September 2020

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Introduction

Due to the ageing of the population, consequent increase in the number of patients requiring palliative care is expected. The World Health Organization has highlighted palliative care as an especially relevant topic due to its effect with the psychosocial aspects of care, dignity and quality of life of individuals, as well as their families and caretakers. Numerous studies conducted worldwide point to a lack of awareness about palliative care, which can be a key obstacle to future development. The aim of this study was to examine attitudes and awareness about palliative care among citizens of a community where there are no specialized palliative care services and the citizens of a community where such services exist. Specific goals were to determine whether there is a difference in sensitivity towards palliative care in terms of age, gender and education between citizens of those two communities.

Theory/Methods

The study was conducted in March and April 2019. Study participants 400 citizens of Republic of Croatia older than 20 years; 200 citizens of the city of Koprivnica where there are no organized palliative care services, and 200 citizens of the city of Čakovec where such services are established. Participants were surveyed using an anonymous questionnaire “Attitudes and awareness about palliative care in the community”, which was designed for this purpose.

Results

We found a statistically significant gender difference; women participants had significantly higher proportion of correct answers about palliative care ($p < 0.001$). Older participants has better knowledge of palliative care, compared to younger ($p < 0.001$). Respondents with lower level of education had less knowledge of palliative care ($p < 0.001$). Citizens of Čakovec, where palliative care services were established, showed higher awareness and more positive attitudes towards palliative care on multiple items of the questionnaire.

Conclusion

Women, older participants, higher education, and being resident of a city with established palliative care services are associated with better knowledge and more positive attitudes towards palliative care.

Lessons learned

While some factors associated with knowledge and attitudes towards palliative care are not modifiable, it is worthwhile to know that having an established palliative care services may be associated with better knowledge and more positive attitudes of citizens towards palliative care. At the community level, knowledge, awareness and access to palliative care services should also be expanded to strengthen individuals, engage the community, and ultimately achieve the goals set out in international palliative care strategies.

Limitations

The survey was conducted in only two cities in Croatia.

Suggestions for future research

Conducting the same study in multiple cities would help in gaining more knowledge about knowledge and awareness about palliative care in Croatia.