
**Agenda Item 7
RC 73/9 Refugee and Migrant Health**

IAHPC Written Statement

The International Association for Hospice and Palliative care welcomes the plan and notes that the five strategic priorities align well with the process of integrating palliative care for refugees and migrants into primary health care in all EUR region member states.

Many refugees and migrants come from countries where healthcare systems were weak or deteriorating. As humanitarian situations escalate, diagnosis, treatment and care become inadequate and prevalence of communicable and noncommunicable disease rise. Some people embark on their journeys with very advanced disease, increasing their need for palliative care. Children with advanced disease may be left alone, bereaved of a parent, traumatised, in an unfamiliar country with an unfamiliar language.

Refugee and migrant flows accelerate the urgency of integrating palliative and primary health care in destination countries. [An estimated 65% of people in Europe lack access to palliative care](#). The specific needs of refugees and migrants must be built into service development.

Language is often a barrier to describing symptoms and accepting diagnosis, treatment, rehabilitation, and palliative care. Sensitive communication, a core part of palliative and end-of-life care, is essential for refugees experiencing severe physical, existential and post-traumatic distress. Properly resourced professional medical interpreters with basic palliative care knowledge can ease communication barriers.

Palliative care practitioners supported by interpreters where necessary, can offer crucial support to generalist colleagues providing primary care to migrants and refugees in ethical decision-making, setting care goals, and managing emotional, moral and spiritual distress. A cultural sensitivity framework will guide interactions and priorities for those caring for people with palliative care needs of all ages, including their families and communities. Individualized care is crucial to addressing cultural issues and different conceptions of autonomy and families cohesion.

Palliative care should be an integral part of the humanitarian emergency response strategy and should include provision of essential medicines (eg, oral morphine for moderate-to-severe pain) to meet patients' urgent needs. [Palliative Care in Humanitarian Aid Situations and Emergencies](#) (PallCHASE) is a global network that works with other agencies to integrate palliative care into humanitarian crisis response.

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