

ACCESS, CAPACITY, KNOWLEDGE AND PERCEPTIONS OF A RURAL PALLIATIVE CARE CLINIC IN SAN MARCOS DE TARRAZÚ, COSTA RICA

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Palliative care is an important part of the growing medical field. Palliative care seeks to improve the quality of life for patients with terminal illnesses or chronic pain during the final stage of life. In Clínica de Control del Dolor y Cuidados Paliativos en la Zona de los Santos, there are medical services, psychological services, physical therapy and social work. The Costa Rican Social Security Council ensures that all insured individuals have access to palliative care. However, resources are more limited for individuals in rural zones than in urban areas. Currently, there are not comprehensive investigations into palliative care clinics and how they function. Thus, this study sought to understand how the clinic functions, how patients perceive the clinic and what individuals know about palliative care. Data on appointment details from 2014 were analyzed, and 55 patients were surveyed in the clinic. Additionally, 50 individuals were interviewed in the central park in San Marcos Central. In 2014, there were 1288 clinic appointments and 588 at-home visits. The no-show rate was 8% in 2014 and could be lowered through reminder methods. Patients reported high satisfaction with care in the clinic. The majority of individuals had heard of palliative care, but few could define it accurately. Individuals who had learned about palliative care through work or study had significantly higher knowledge scores than individuals who had learned about it through other sources (p-value < 0.001). Additionally, individuals from Tarrazú knew significantly more about palliative care than individuals from other areas, probably due to the fact that the clinic is in Tarrazú (p-value < 0.001). In the future, hospitals and clinics should focus more on promotional activities in the most rural parts of the zone.