



WORLD **HOSPICE** AND **PALLIATIVE CARE** DAY

10 OCTOBER 2026

PAIN MANAGEMENT: AN ESSENTIAL PART OF PALLIATIVE CARE

DIGITAL TOOLKIT

We are grateful to **The Y.C. Ho/Helen & Michael Chiang Foundation** for their support of WHPCD

Over 20 million people die every year in unnecessary pain. Not because we lack the medicines. Not because we lack the knowledge. But because systems, policies, and stigma continue to stand between patients and the relief they deserve.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABOUT WHPCD 03

WHY IS WHPCD NEEDED? 05

WHO ORGANISES WHPCD? 06

WHPCD SUB-THEMES 07

CAMPAIGN KEY MESSAGES 09

SAMPLE SOCIAL MEDIA MESSAGES 11

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES 15

WAYS TO PARTICIPATE 18

RAISING FUNDS 19

CAMPAIGN BRANDING 20



ABOUT WHPCD

World Hospice and Palliative Care Day (WHPCD) is a unified day of action in support of hospice and palliative care. Palliative care is an interdisciplinary caregiving approach that optimises quality of life and mitigates serious health-related suffering among people with advanced illnesses and their carers. WHPCD has been marked every year for the last 21 years. Join us on Saturday, 10 October to advocate for better hospice and palliative care services around the world. With one accord, we will raise our voices and do what we can in our different contexts to send the message: There is no Universal Health Coverage (UHC) without palliative care integration into healthcare systems across the globe.

No one should suffer in silence. Pain management is not a luxury — it is the foundation of compassionate care and a fundamental human right.

The 2026 theme — Pain Management: An Essential Part of Palliative Care — was selected to recentre attention on the multidimensional nature of pain: physical, psychological, social, and spiritual. In people living with serious illness, these dimensions interact in ways that are often complex but consistently consequential. At its core, palliative care is about improving quality of life, dignity, and comfort through a genuinely person-centred approach, one that respects each individual's right to accurate, culturally sensitive information about their condition and to

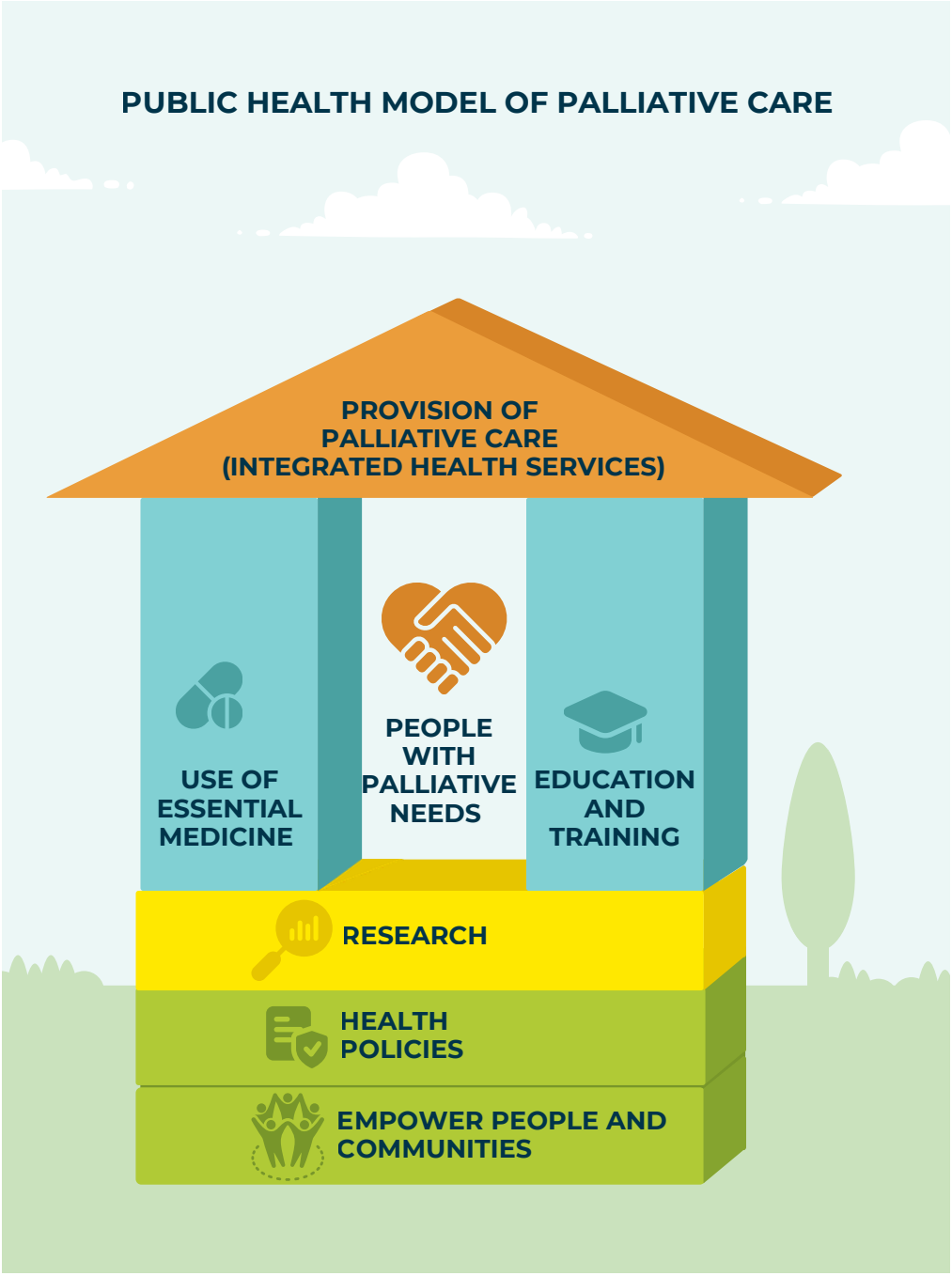
meaningful participation in decisions about their own care. People needing palliative care (PNPC) are entitled to access both the services and the medicines they require, including opioid analgesics such as morphine, within the framework of the three UN international drug control conventions, an entitlement that is itself an expression of the fundamental right to the highest attainable standard of health.

The scale of need is significant; **over 73 million** people require palliative care annually, a figure set to grow as populations age and non-communicable and chronic diseases become more prevalent globally. Children are not a peripheral concern; they represent at least 14% of palliative care need and must be explicitly included in any response. Alongside this, governments must develop reliable national estimates of the controlled medicines required to meet that need, including formulations appropriate for paediatric use.

Embedding palliative care within health systems is a cornerstone of achieving Universal Health Coverage encompassing financial protection, equitable access to quality services, and the availability of safe, affordable essential medicines.

There is an urgent case for policymakers and key stakeholders to treat palliation not as a specialist add-on but as a thread running through the entire continuum of care, particularly at the primary care level. Without deliberate integration into both health and social care systems, inequitable access to palliative care will persist.





WHY IS WHPCD NEEDED?

Palliative care remains one of the most significant unmet needs in global health. Research conducted with the WHO through the Global Atlas of Palliative Care reveals a stark treatment gap: only 14% of the more than 73 million adults and children who need palliative care receive it. Each year, an estimated 20 million people die in preventable pain and suffering, a direct consequence of inadequate access to palliative care and pain relief. Closing this gap requires a structured, system-level response. The WHO's public health model offers a proven framework (Figure 1), emphasising policy development, education, medicine availability, community empowerment, research, and implementation, though meaningful barriers exist at every one of these levels.

Over 73 million people need palliative care every year, yet only 14% have access to this essential service. The pain they endure is not inevitable. It is the result of unequal systems, unequal policies, and unequal political will. That must change.





WHO ORGANISES WHPCD?

World Hospice and Palliative Care Day is led by the Worldwide Hospice Palliative Care Alliance (WHPCA) on behalf of the global palliative care community. We are an international nonprofit dedicated solely to advancing hospice and palliative care across the globe. The organisation draws on contributions from the wider palliative care community, including those with personal experience of receiving such care. With a membership of 537 organisational membersspanning over 120 countries, WHPCA works to enhance the well-being of people who need palliative care worldwide and reduce avoidable suffering by uniting the global community around this cause. The day itself is delivered in partnership with the International Children's Palliative Care Network (ICPCN), Palliative Care in Humanitarian Aid Situations and Emergencies (PallCHASE), and the International Association for Hospice and Palliative Care (IAHPC).

On October 10, we raise our voices through stories that move us, challenge us, and remind us why this work matters. We look forward to your participation in this vital global initiative.

WHPCD SUB-THEMES

Pain Relief is a Human Right, not a Privilege.

- Over 73 million people each year are expected to need palliative care including about 28 million near the end of life, with approximately 75% of this population living in low- and middle-income countries. Yet, only about 14% of those who need this care can actually receive it. Not all palliative care patients have pain though over 80% of cancer patients referred to palliative care need pain care.
- The UN Human Rights Council has affirmed that access to pain relief is a component of the right to health, yet according to the International Narcotics Control Board over 80% of the world's population lacks adequate access to strong analgesics such as morphine due to policy, regulatory, or supply barriers, meaning this right remains denied to the majority of people who need it most.
- Low- and middle-income countries bear 76% of the global need for palliative care but receive only approximately 4% of available palliative care services, exposing a stark inequality that makes pain management a matter of global justice, not just clinical practice.

Breaking the Silence: Addressing the Stigma Around Pain and Its Treatment.

- Stigma operates as a double barrier: patients suffer in silence because pain is culturally minimised, and healthcare workers hesitate to prescribe adequate pain relief for fear of social, regulatory or legal backlash. The WHPCA actively works to eliminate the stigma surrounding pain relief by challenging national public policies, especially in developing countries where prescribed opioid use is controversial due to concerns about drug addiction.
- In many communities, pain is culturally accepted as an inevitable part of serious illness, discouraging patients and families from seeking relief and leaving suffering normalised and invisible a barrier that education, open dialogue, and compassionate community engagement can directly dismantle.

Train to Care: Building a Workforce That Can Manage Pain.

- Even where medicines exist, pain goes undertreated because the workforce lacks the knowledge and confidence to manage it properly. The WHO describes palliative care as an approach that improves quality of life through early identification, impeccable assessment, and treatment of pain, but this requires a well-trained interdisciplinary workforce to deliver and access to essential palliative care medicines.
- Even where essential medicines exist, pain frequently goes untreated because health workers lack the skills and confidence to assess and manage it effectively. Investing in palliative care education at every level of the health system, from specialists to community health workers, the most direct bridge between policy commitment and patient relief.
- Family caregivers are often the primary providers of palliative care at home, yet they are routinely expected to manage complex tasks such as pain monitoring and medication administration.

Low- and middle-income countries bear 76% of the global need for palliative care but receive only approximately 4% of available palliative care services

Pain Has No Age Limit: From Children to the Elderly

- Pain management in palliative care is too often discussed as though it only concerns older adults nearing the end of life. Roughly 10 million young people around the globe who require palliative care are children, many not yet near the end-of-life, a figure that is frequently invisible in public discourse. Without palliative care services, seriously ill patients of all ages go through unnecessary or undertreated pain.
- Children represent at least 14% of the global need for palliative care, with over 95% of them living in low- and middle-income countries, yet paediatric pain management remains severely underprioritised in global health policy, making it urgent that national palliative care strategies explicitly include children's needs, including age-appropriate medicine formulations.
- Older adults account for approximately 65% of all palliative care cases globally, and while age-related illness brings a disproportionate burden of chronic pain, this suffering is frequently undertreated or dismissed as a normal part of ageing an assumption that palliative care directly challenges by affirming that relief from pain is a right at every stage of life.

Policy into Practice: Integrating Pain Management into Health Systems.

- Countries that have implemented dedicated opioid access policies, such as Uganda, which made oral morphine available free of charge through hospice and government health facilities, demonstrate that policy reform directly translates into measurable improvements in pain relief availability, providing proven models that other nations can adapt and adopt.
- The 2025 WHO Global Palliative Care Ranking of 201 countries identified medicine access as one of the weakest dimensions globally, confirming that without explicit policy action to ensure the availability of essential pain medicines at every level of the health system, progress in education, workforce, and service delivery will continue to fall short of reaching patients.

Roughly 10 million young people around the globe who require palliative care are children, many not yet near the end-of-life, a figure that is frequently invisible in public discourse.



CAMPAIGN KEY MESSAGES

Pain relief is not optional — it is the most basic promise of care.

- The World Health Organization describes palliative care as an ethical responsibility of health systems, explicitly identifying pain prevention and relief as a core component, meaning that any health system that fails to provide adequate pain management is not simply falling short of best practice; it is failing its most fundamental obligation to patients.
- Pain relief is not only about medicine. In palliative care total pain encompasses physical, psychological, social, and spiritual/existential pain. Multi-dimensional assessment allows palliative care workers to identify the causes of pain and to tailor pain care interventions to relieve causes of suffering using interdisciplinary approaches.
- Some 20 million people that need palliative care die every year in pain and suffering due to lack of access to palliative care and pain relief, a figure that represents not a medical inevitability but a systemic failure one that targeted policy action, workforce investment, and community engagement have already proven can be reversed.

No one should die in pain when the medicine to prevent it exists

- Morphine, one of the most effective medicines for managing severe pain in palliative care, is included on the WHO Model List of Essential Medicines and is inexpensive to produce, yet over 5.5 billion people live in countries with little or no access to controlled medicines for pain management, revealing that the barrier is not the absence of a solution but the absence of political will to implement it.
- Countries that have taken deliberate steps to reform opioid access policies have seen measurable increases in morphine availability and appropriate use for pain management, demonstrating that when governments act, patients benefit and that the deaths and suffering caused by undertreated pain are preventable, not inevitable.

A caregiver who cannot manage pain is a caregiver you have failed.

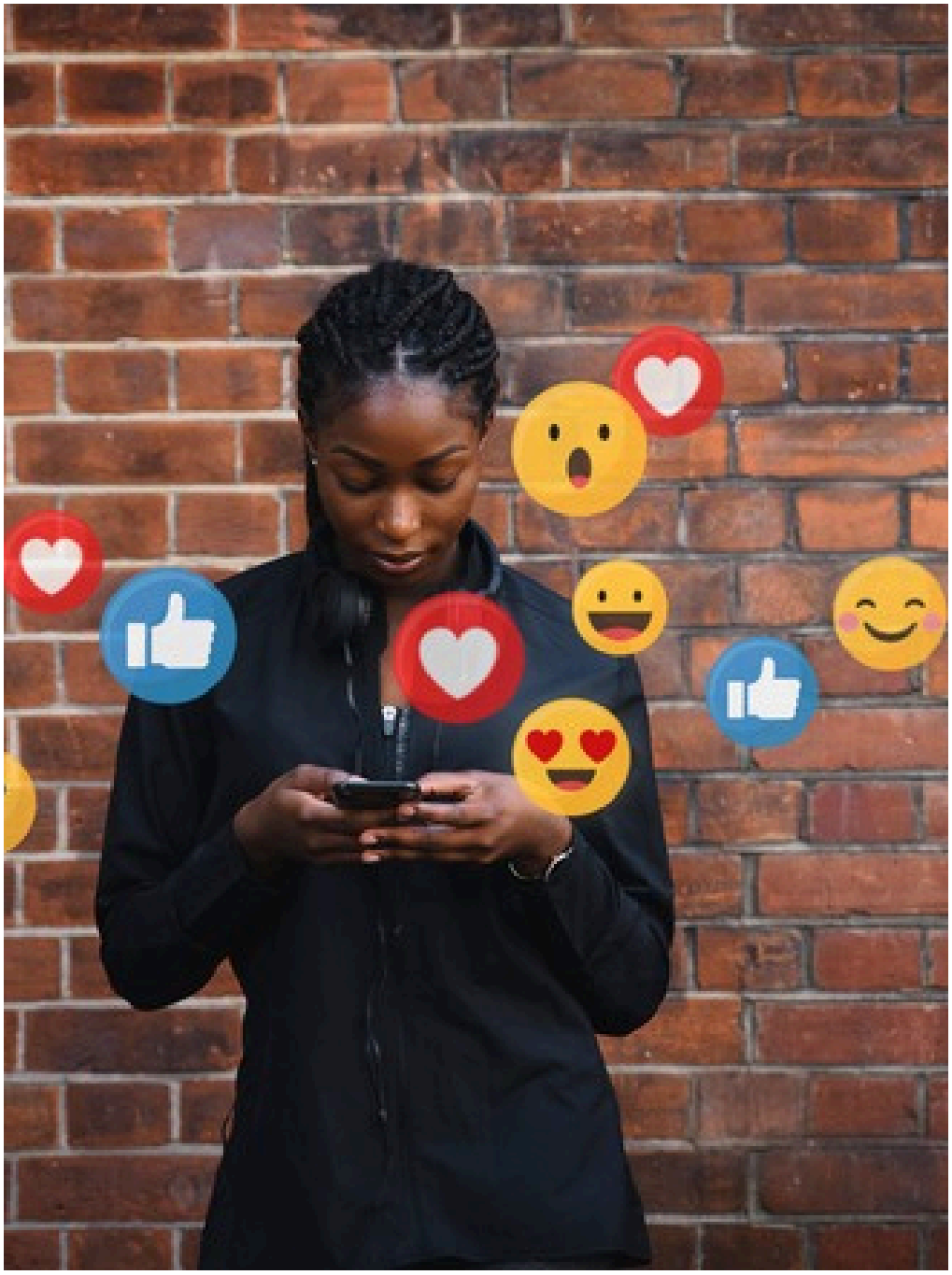
- Family caregivers are partners in the delivery of palliative care at home and play a central role in pain monitoring, medication administration, and emotional support, yet they are frequently required to perform these complex responsibilities without formal training, adequate guidance, or psychological support, placing both the patient and the caregiver at risk of preventable suffering.
- Research consistently shows that when caregivers receive structured education and support, patient pain outcomes improve, caregiver burden decreases, and the quality of end-of-life care at home rises significantly, making caregiver training not a peripheral concern but a direct and cost-effective investment in better pain management globally.

Accepting pain medication is not giving up — it is the first step toward dignity.

- Stigma is one of the most persistent barriers to adequate pain management in palliative care, and it operates on two levels simultaneously: patients and families who suffer in silence because asking for pain relief feels like an admission of defeat, and clinicians who hesitate to raise the subject for fear of removing hope.
- In many cultural and clinical contexts, raising the subject of pain relief in palliative care is associated with abandoning hope or accelerating death. A misconception that causes patients to endure preventable suffering in silence and prevents families from advocating for the care their loved ones deserve, making public education and open community dialogue essential tools for change.
- Early and honest conversations about pain between patients, families, and healthcare providers leads to better pain assessment, more personalised care plans, and improved quality of life. Evidence that breaking the silence around pain is not only emotionally important but clinically consequential, and that the first conversation is often the most powerful intervention of all.

We need medicines available to control children: Relief from pain is a human right.

- Relief from pain is a fundamental element of the right to health and to freedom from cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment. Children have the same right as adults to effective pain relief, adapted to their age, development, and clinical needs.
- Children constitute at least 14% of the global need for palliative care, yet paediatric pain management remains critically underfunded and deprioritised, with many countries lacking age-appropriate medicine formulations entirely a gap that leaves some of the most vulnerable patients in the world without access to the relief that is their right.
- Clinical hesitancy around pain management in children, rooted in concerns about opioid safety and dosing, frequently results in undertreated pain that causes unnecessary suffering and long-term psychological harm, making the case for dedicated paediatric palliative care training and clear clinical guidelines an urgent global health priority.



SAMPLE SOCIAL MEDIA MESSAGES

Join us in using social media to help raise the profile of World Hospice and Palliative Care Day 2026. We've put together some ready-to-use sample posts for your channels. Hashtags are key to reaching the right audiences, so be sure to include them and don't forget to add your own local hashtags to connect your community to the global conversation.

Facebook:

Facebook is a powerful platform for connecting with supporters and influencers, sharing compelling content, and spreading the word about World Hospice and Palliative Care Day. Use it to build momentum around your event, tell your personal story, and even drive fundraising. Follow the Worldwide Hospice Palliative Care Alliance on Facebook to stay up to date.

X (Twitter)

Follow the @whpca account on X (Twitter) and share your support for the day through your own tweets. Feel free to use the draft tweets provided below or craft your own message; just make sure to include the relevant hashtags. Consider tagging key accounts such as @DrTedros, @UHC2030, @CSO4UHC, @UHCPolicyCentre, @WHPCA, @NCDA, @UICC, @WHO, @ICPCN, @IAHPC, and @PallCHASE, as well as your local policymakers, national palliative care associations, and media outlets.

YouTube:

YouTube is another great option for sharing video content; use it to post key messages and capture highlights from your World Day events. You can also subscribe to the Worldwide Hospice and Palliative Care Alliance's YouTube channel to stay connected.

LinkedIn:

LinkedIn offers an excellent opportunity to engage fellow professionals, organisations, and potential sponsors for local World Day events. You can repurpose your Facebook content and tailor it to suit a professional LinkedIn audience. As always, include relevant hashtags and follow the Worldwide Hospice and Palliative Care Alliance on LinkedIn to stay informed.

Instagram:

Instagram is a photo and video-focused platform with a particularly strong following among teens and young adults. As a visually driven space, striking images and videos are key to capturing attention and driving engagement. Keep in mind that clickable links cannot be included directly in posts unless you have a business account. A useful workaround is to place the link in your bio and reference it within your post. Follow @thewhpca on Instagram to keep up with updates.

Main Hashtags: #WHPCDay26 #PalliativeCare

Other Key Hashtags: #UHC #Health #HealthCare #Hospice #HumanRights #UHC2030 #WHO #Care

SUGGESTED ACCOUNTS TO TAG:

Across all platforms, consider tagging: **@thewhpca @ICPCN @IAHPC @PallCHASE @WHO @UHC2030 @DrTedros**
Plus your national Ministry of Health, regional palliative care associations, and local media.



Facebook Posts:

1 Campaign Day Post:

Today is World Hospice and Palliative Care Day 2026. 🌍

This year, we are talking about something that touches every family, every community, and every corner of the world: pain management.
Pain relief is not optional. It is not a luxury. It is the most basic promise of care, and for too many people around the world, that promise is still broken.

Over 20 million people die every year in unnecessary pain. Not because we lack the medicines. Not because we lack the knowledge. But because systems, policies, and stigma continue to stand between patients and the relief they deserve.

On this day, we stand together: patients, families, caregivers, health workers, advocates, and policymakers to say: enough.

Join us. Share your story. Raise your voice. And help us build a world where no one dies in preventable pain.

#WHPCDay26 #PalliativeCare #HumanRights #UHC #Care

2 Caregiver Story Prompt:

To every person who has sat beside a loved one in pain and felt helpless —You are not alone. And your experience matters.

Caregivers are the backbone of palliative care around the world. They manage pain, provide comfort, and give everything they have, often without training, without support, and without anyone asking how they are doing.

This World Hospice and Palliative Care Day, we want to hear from you.
💬 Share your story in the comments. Tell us what pain management in palliative care has meant for your family. Your voice is part of this campaign.

#WHPCDay26 #PalliativeCare #Hospice #Care #HealthCare

3 Policy / Advocacy:

Did you know that over 5.5 billion people live in countries with little or no access to controlled medicines for pain management?

Morphine, one of the most effective tools for relieving pain in palliative care, is affordable, widely manufactured, and on the WHO Essential Medicines List. Yet for most of the world, it remains out of reach.

This is not a supply problem. It is a policy problem.

On #WHPCDay26, we are calling on governments to act to review the policies that stand between patients and pain relief, and to make palliative care a real part of every national health system.

#PalliativeCare #UHC #UHC2030 #HumanRights #WHO

4 Children / Paediatric:

At least 10% of the global need for palliative care involves children.

Over 80% of those children live in low- and middle-income countries where pain medicines in child-appropriate formulations are rarely available, and specialist paediatric palliative care barely exists.

A child in pain deserves relief as urgently as any adult. Age is never a reason to wait.

This #WHPCDay26, we are calling for paediatric palliative care to be seen, funded, and integrated into national health systems everywhere.

#PalliativeCare #Health #HumanRights #Care

Instagram Posts

- Pain relief is not optional. It is the most basic promise of care. This #WHPCDay26, we stand with every patient, every family, and every caregiver still waiting for that promise to be kept.
  #PalliativeCare #HumanRights #Care #Hospice #Health #UHC #WHPCDay26

- 20 million people. Every year. Dying in preventable pain. This is not inevitable. This is a choice we have the power to change.
  #WHPCDay26 #PalliativeCare #WHO #HealthCare #HumanRights #UHC2030

- Accepting pain medication is not giving up. It is the first step toward dignity. Say it to someone today.
  #WHPCDay26 #PalliativeCare #Care #Health #HumanRights #Hospice

- Every number has a name. Every name has a story. Every story deserves to be heard. Watch. Share. Act.
  #WHPCDay26 #PalliativeCare #WHO #HealthCare #HumanRights #UHC #Care #Hospice

LinkedIn Posts

- Today marks World Hospice and Palliative Care Day 2026 — and this year, the global palliative care community is addressing one of the most urgent and underreported challenges in global health: pain management.

  The evidence is unambiguous. Over 20 million people die every year in unnecessary pain. More than 80% of the world's population lacks adequate access to opioid analgesics. And despite morphine's status as a WHO Essential Medicine, policy, regulatory, and supply barriers continue to deny relief to the patients who need it most.

  Pain management is not a peripheral issue in palliative care. It is the foundation. And it is everyone's responsibility: clinicians, policymakers, advocates, educators, and communities alike.

  On this day, I stand with the global palliative care movement in calling for urgent, sustained action to make pain relief a reality for every patient regardless of where they are born, how old they are, or what they can afford.

  #WHPCDay26 #PalliativeCare #UHC #GlobalHealth #HumanRights #WHO #HealthCare

- Pain management in palliative care is not just a clinical challenge; it is a workforce challenge, a policy challenge, and a cultural challenge.

  The 2025 WHO Global Palliative Care Ranking identified medicine access as one of the weakest dimensions across 201 countries. Meanwhile, family caregivers who shoulder much of the daily reality of palliative care at home are routinely expected to manage complex pain without training or support.

  The gaps are clear. The solutions are known. What is needed now is collective will.

  This #WHPCDay26, I am proud to be part of a global movement that refuses to accept unnecessary suffering as inevitable.

  #PalliativeCare #UHC2030 #HealthCare #Health #HumanRights #WHO #Care



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

WORLD **HOSPICE** AND **PALLIATIVE CARE** DAY

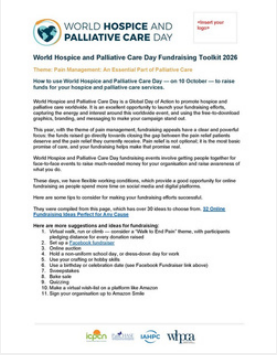
LOGOS



MEDIA RELEASE TEMPLATES



GOVERNMENT PETITION LETTER TEMPLATE



FUNDRAISING



FILM YOURSELF TECH TIPS



WORKING WITH MEDIA



WAYS TO PARTICIPATE

Solidarity

Share campaign messages across your personal and organisational Facebook and X profiles. For added convenience, take advantage of scheduling tools to post multiple times throughout the day.

Engage your community to participate in WHPCD

Bring together patients, families, and community members by organising an event that highlights palliative care as an integral part of Universal Health Coverage. Create a space for people to share their experiences, and extend invitations to local media and key government stakeholders. Don't forget to register your event on the WHPC Day map and share your stories with the wider community.

Engage the media

Reach out to local and national media to make the case for palliative care as a vital component of a universal health system, and share a copy of the campaign's media release with them.

Record a short video

Produce a short two-to-three-minute video calling on government to invest in palliative care as part of a stronger, more comprehensive health system. Choose a compelling spokesperson who can speak to the importance of integrating palliative care, including bereavement and mental health support, into Universal Health Coverage or national health frameworks.

Engage stakeholders

Write to your country's Ministry of Health, WHO national and regional offices, health system providers, local clinics, and professional health bodies, urging them to engage their national health representatives in championing palliative care under Universal Health Coverage. Also extend invitations to WHO and other prominent leaders to speak at your event.

Reach out to public figures

Engage a prominent patient, palliative care advocate, or public figure from your region or country to lend their voice to your event, whether by sharing their personal story or publicly endorsing World Hospice and Palliative Care Day to help attract greater media and public attention.

Over 20 million people die every year in unnecessary pain. More than 80% of the world's population lacks adequate access to opioid analgesics.

TIPS FOR ORGANIZING AN EVENT



- Start by defining your target audience; consider who would be most likely to engage as a participant or partner. Identify the key messages you want to convey, and the resources required to deliver them. If you already have a meeting or conference scheduled at your institution, look for opportunities to weave the " Pain Management: An Essential Part of Palliative Care " tools and messaging into your existing programme.
- When distributing invitations, think of one creative element that can help spotlight World Hospice and Palliative Care Day. For instance, a themed dress code, custom t-shirts or caps featuring the 2026 theme logo, or a dedicated event poster or banner.
- Collaborate with other institutions and seek out sponsors to help fund and support the event. Potential partners could include fellow organisations as well as private sector contributors.
- Give your event a strong visual identity by incorporating the campaign logo across materials such as t-shirts and posters carrying key campaign messages and distribute these as widely as possible. Promote the event across social media and boost visibility by sharing and tagging posts with influential public figures in your region.
- Extend invitations to media outlets to cover your events, or proactively pitch a story that speaks to the significance of this year's theme.
- Capture the event through photos and video and share the content broadly across your social media channels. Be sure to tag your posts with #WHPCDay26 and #PalliativeCare.

Be sure to register your event on the WHPCD Website Map by going here



RAISING FUNDS

To mark this year's World Hospice & Palliative Care Day, WHPCA asks you to support World Day by donating to the Close the Access Abbys to Palliative Care Campaign. Held annually, this year on 10 October 2026, WHPCD is a Global Day of Action celebrating and supporting hospice and palliative care. Each year, more than 70 million families worldwide need palliative care, yet only around 14% of that need is currently being met, with over 75% concentrated in low- and middle-income countries. Whatever you're able to give, your contribution will help bridge the gap in access to palliative care for those who need it most. You can donate to the WHPCD campaign via the Help Us Close the Access Abyss to Palliative Care Campaign using the link below. **https://www.globalgiving.org/projec ts/help-us-close-the-access-abyss-to-palliative-care/**

For additional information on raising funds for your events please download the Resources Mobilization guide at: https://thewhpca.org/resources/an-introduction-to-resource-mobilisation

CAMPAIGN BRANDING

LOGO



EVENT FLYER/POSTER

Editable Word Documents: change images and text



TYPE

Headings and Subheadings:

OPEN SANS BOLD
MONTSERRAT BOLD
OPEN SANS SEMIBOLD

Body Copy:

Open Sans Regular
Monteserrat Regular

Word documents

Arial

COLOUR

Primary Colours

CMYK: Cyan 6, Magenta 43, Yellow 88, black 0 RGB: Red 235, Green 157, Blue 59
#eb9d3b

CMYK: Cyan 47, Magenta 0, Yellow 19, Black 0 RGB: Red 129, Green 207, Blue 211
#81cfd3

CMYK: Cyan 99, Magenta 72, Yellow 45, Black 40 RGB: Red 0, Green 52 Blue 74
#00344a

100% Black

Secondary Colours

50% tint

Background 15% blue tint

CMYK: Cyan 6, Magenta 68, Yellow 100, black 0 RGB: Red 230, Green 114, Blue 37
#e67225

CMYK: Cyan 74, Magenta 0, Yellow 25, Black 8 RGB: Red 129, Green 174, Blue 184
#00aeb8

To mark this year's World Hospice & Palliative Care Day, WHPCA asks you to support World Day by donating to the Close the Access Abbys to Palliative Care Campaign.

Contact information

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