

ESMO Palliative Care Fellowship (26 February – 24 March 2024)

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FINAL REPORT

Home Institute: Krystyna Kiel Oncology Center, Georgia

Host Institute: Evangelische Kliniken Essen-Mitte, Germany

Mentor: Michael Stahl

Introduction

Due to the absent of access to palliative care for Georgian patients, I became interested in this field of oncology. In order to provide better palliative care outcomes for patients in my country, it is necessary for obstacles to be overcome. The absence of palliative care services was my motivation to apply for the ESMO Palliative Care Fellowship. As an oncologist, I understand the importance of delivering holistic care to each patient, understanding that thorough support is as crucial, as is access to the latest treatments.

Goals or aims

My application to the ESMO Palliative Care Fellowship stemmed from my desire to contribute to the enhancement of palliative care services in Georgia. The goals I aimed to achieve through this programme are:

- To improve my skills in identifying and managing symptoms associated with cancer, including pain, nausea, vomiting and depression.
- To build greater confidence in discussing palliative care outcomes with patients and their families.
- To embrace a more comprehensive approach to cancer treatment.
- To understand the management techniques necessary for creating a palliative care and hospice referral system.
- To learn how to establish a multidisciplinary team dedicated to palliative care.

Description of the time spent at host institute

My observership comprised rotations at Evangelische Kliniken Essen-Mitte, Germany, where I engaged in morning ward handovers and accompanied the healthcare team during their rounds. I was particularly struck by the team's commendable bedside manner and the empathy they demonstrated towards patients. We evaluated a range of patient symptoms, including pain, nausea, vomiting, dietary intake, emotional state and the need for psychological, spiritual and financial support. I acquired knowledge regarding various pharmacological and non-pharmacological methods for managing these symptoms. Furthermore, I participated in multidisciplinary team meetings and educational sessions in the afternoon. In my spare time, I accessed the department's

resources and guidelines, and I also observed the Hospice and Home Care Service with an honourable colleague.

During my fellowship, I gained insight into the various care options available to cancer patients at Evangelische Kliniken Essen-Mitte. Patients could choose to receive care in the hospital, hospice, or in their own homes, based on their specific needs and preferences. I observed how the palliative care team effectively addressed the needs of patients in multiple settings with coordination among a range of healthcare professionals including doctors, clinical nurse specialists, discharge teams, general practitioners, physical and occupational therapists, chaplains, psychiatrists, speech and language therapists and home care providers. Whether or not patients were receiving active cancer treatment, I witnessed the continuous care they received until the end of their lives.

Conclusion

My fellowship placement has greatly expanded my insight into the contribution of palliative care in the context of cancer treatment. Although I face various challenges in applying my newfound knowledge within my home environment, this experience has invigorated my commitment to develop an optimal palliative care system for cancer patients in Georgia. The ESMO Palliative Care Fellowship has underscored the need for further research to enhance the promotion of palliative care in my country. Personally, it has inspired me to engage in advanced studies in this critical area of healthcare.

Acknowledgments

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the European Society of Medical Oncology (ESMO) for creating opportunities that facilitate the professional development of young oncologists such as myself. My gratitude extends to my mentor Michael Stahl and colleagues from Evangelische Kliniken Essen-Mitte, for providing me with an unforgettable learning experience. Finally, I wish to acknowledge my patients, whose stories and strength inspire my continuous pursuit of knowledge.

