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**INVOLVEMENT OF THE TRADITIONAL MEDICINE PRACTITIONERS AND THE RURAL COMMUNITIES IN PALLIATIVE CARE PROVISION TO THE TERMINALLY ILL PEOPLE**Martha Njama. *Prometra Kenya, Kitengela, Kenya*

10.1136/bmjspcare-2014-000654.246

**Issues** Gone are the days when palliative care was known for cancer patients only. Today, the need for palliative care is on the rise due to the increasing number of terminally ill cases from

other diseases; communicable and non communicable. The challenges of brain drain and work overload for nurses. With this kind of scenario, we must not ignore or underestimate the role of the Traditional Medicine Practitioners as they are known to be the community primary health care providers, community members and the spiritual care providers. Distance to the palliative care centres and hospices in the rural areas is a barrier.

**Description** Prometra Kenya has supported Traditional Medicine Practitioners and the community members with trainings aimed at building skills to improve care planning, counselling, communication, delivery of care to improve the quality of life for those with chronic diseases or life-limiting illness and protection from being infected. After the first group was trained, they are now trainers of other community members.

**Lessons Learned** Traditional Medicine Practitioners are respected by their communities and even the terminally ill patients feel free to discuss secret issues with them. The family members are more productive because they utilize the time that would have been used for hospice or center visits to do their work. TMPs and community members can handle patients with little supervision. The model is cost effective.

**Conclusions** Use of community model has proved to be a success in the rural areas. It has also brought knowledge to the TMPs and the communities. Rural communities are uniquely positioned to meet the challenges of providing palliative care through collaborative efforts. The communities need to be encouraged on the skills building trainings.

**Recommendations** More support is needed to facilitate more training to the Traditional Medicine Practitioners and the communities. Incentives to encourage community trainings.