

Palliative Care & Clinical Trials and Pharmacovigilance

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Blazenka Eror Matic

La Verna, Croatia

The role of volunteers in palliative care

Volunteers are recognized as the third resource for palliative patients alongside with professional care and family care. They do not replace them. Volunteers have their own special place and their specific role in that care.

What can volunteers do for a patient and family? Volunteers can be with the patient and the family and help in way they need it. The importance of this "being there" needs to be revealed. Terminal patients in the last moments of life feel no pain just because of the nearness of physical death, but rather the pain of "social death". Mother Theresa also said that there were no more serious illness in human life than being "unwanted, unhappy, isolated and left out".

Besides the volunteers who will be directly with the patient and the family, volunteers who are involved in organizing, fundraising, promotion and various other roles are also important. In order to help volunteers to play their role and to make this assistance sustainable, it is important to have volunteer organizer (manager) that links all three care resources (family, professionals and volunteers).

How to attract volunteers? We can do that by developing a variety of volunteering programs for palliative care that need

to be tailored to the target group (kindergartens, schools, students, employees, retirees, etc.). Programs should also be adapted to modern ways of communication. It is not easy to promote volunteers in palliative care because it is always associated with death and dying. So when we talk to the community it is better to send positive messages, talk personal stories, emphasize values of volunteering.

Speaker Biography

Blazenka Eror Matic obtained her Master's degree at the Faculty of Economics in Zagreb and has 33 years of working experience in financial sector. She has long term volunteering experience as a member of the Secular Franciscan Order (since 1996). In palliative care she had been included as project manager since 2009 when the Mobile Team of volunteers were organized. Ten-year project management of the Mobile Team of volunteers in palliative care has contributed to the acquisition of knowledge and experience on the organization of palliative care in Croatia and in the world, especially the place and role of volunteers in the palliative team to provide comprehensive palliative care for patients and their families. Considering that these activities are financed by donations, rich experience in writing and implementing projects was accumulated.

e: blazenkae@gmail.com

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