

Publication

Challenges of paediatric palliative care in Romania: a focus groups study.

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The availability of palliative care facilities for children vary considerably among the European member states. In Romania, a country where health expenditure is among the lowest in Europe, palliative care has been mainly provided by charitable organizations. Despite the high number of children needing palliative care, there is scant literature and research available on paediatric palliative care in Romania. The study explores the viewpoints of various paediatric oncology providers with regard to paediatric palliative care provision in Romania.; Four mixed focus groups were conducted at four university-affiliated paediatric oncology centres located in three distinct Romanian regions (Bucuresti-Ifov, Nord-Est and Nord-Vest). The focus groups were analyzed using thematic coding.; For many healthcare professionals, emotional burden inherent to the profession; unhealthy work-life balance and understaffing were among the biggest barriers to the successful integration of pediatric palliative care. The lack of staff was attributed to a shortage of financial resources, and to the persisting cultural stigma surrounding palliative care and oncology. Also political turmoil was identified as an important obstacle to palliative care implementation.; Significant barriers persist limiting the broader implementation of pediatric palliative care in Romania. In order to render palliative care in pediatric oncology more sustainable, more attention should be paid to the mental health care of healthcare professionals working in this field, to the development of mobile palliative care services and to the emigration of skilled medical staff.

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