REPORT
ESSENTIAL PAIN MANAGEMENT (EPM) WORKSHOPS
Munnar, Idukki District, Kerala, India
7-9 Feb 2015

Executive Summary

• Globally, pain (of all types) is often an unrecognized and inadequately treated problem.

• Fortunately, many effective pain management strategies are “low tech” and cheap and can offer significant improvements to an individual’s quality of life.

• The Essential Pain Management (EPM) workshop has been developed:
  o To improve knowledge about pain.
  o To provide a simple framework for treating pain.
  o To address pain management barriers.

• We ran two EPM Workshops at the Tata Global Beverages Ltd. General Hospital, Munnar on the 7th and the 9th of Feb 2015. We successfully trained a total of 76 health workers.

• Recommendations:
  o Run 1-day workshops for Tata healthcare staff who were unable to attend
  o Run 3-day workshops at regional tea estate hospitals

Background

Idukki District has a population of 1.1 million. It is an economically disadvantaged district in Kerala with a literacy rate of 91% (Kerala literacy- 94%). Munnar is a populous town located at an elevation of 1500m, surrounded by reserve forests. Patient assessment is often dependant on home visits by ‘Welfare Officers’ who are trained to deliver medication, do wound dressings and replace catheters. They report to the Doctors and Nurses at the General Hospital. The Tata General Hospital in Munnar is financially subsided by the Tata corporation and provides free of cost health care (primary and secondary including emergency services) to all employees of the 2 large Tea estates and the tribal population in the Nilgiri hills. Additionally, any patient who presents at the hospital is cared for at very low cost. The Managing Director of the Hospital supported the workshop by providing a good venue with audiovisual support, transportation and accommodation for the instructors. Food, and printing were all arranged locally at very reasonable cost. All doctors in the region (including specialists) and nurses were encouraged to attend. Extensive arrangements were made to involve doctors, nurses and welfare officers from neighbouring tea estates and government clinics, many of whom travelled 20-30kms across hilly terrain to attend. The Hospital recently opened a Palliative Care unit run by Anaesthetists, one of who was trained by EPM in Idukki in 2013.
Course participants enthusiastically identified a number of common local pain problems including cancer, burns and trauma. Barriers to pain relief that were actively discussed included remote patient locations, lack of healthcare workers unavailable patient records, medication incompliance.

Course Dates

We ran a one day workshop on the 7th of Feb. 92 participants attended although many had to leave at lunchtime to attend to hospital duties. We finished the day with 32 attending the case discussions- 12 Nurses, 13 Doctors (including the hospital surgeon, Gynaecologist, Emergency doctors), and 7 Welfare Officers. On Feb 8th, we conducted a half-day instructor workshop and trained 10 new Instructors- 6 Doctors and 4 Nurses. On the 9th of Feb, the one day workshop was attended by 13 participants- 11 Nurses, 1 Doctor and 1 Welfare Officer.

Course Instructors

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Course Participants  
(See separate list, attached)  
The first workshop was opened with ceremony. The Chief Guest invited to the event by Tata Hospitals was Dr Cherian Koshy, the Director of Pain services at the
Regional Cancer Centre in Trivandrum Kerala. The Chairman of the Tata Tea Estates also attended and spoke at the event.
The first day saw a larger number of participants. The day 3 workshop was attended by relatively junior health care staff including 7 Welfare Officers, an arrangement that was suggested by the organisers.
Participants for the one-day workshop included Primary Care Physicians, Emergency Doctors, Anaesthetists, a Surgeon and an O&G Doctor. Some primary doctors visited from neighbouring towns working at clinics (‘dispensaries’).
A large group of nurses attended including those working at the General Hospital (general and a few intensive care) and some who travelled from remote hospitals and clinics in the region.
10 new Instructors were trained including 6 doctors and 4 nurses.
On the Instructor led workshop on Day3, 13 Nurses and welfare officers were instructed.

Venue and Catering
The workshops were held at the Tata General Hospital Munnar. This was an excellent venue with a large hall that easily accommodated the participants. The instructors were accommodated at the Tata Tea Club cottages. Daytime meals and beverages/snacks were provided at the Hospital. These were simple and wholesome. Breakfast and evening meals were provided at the club. The instructors were invited to a Club event on the evening of day 1 that celebrated the region of Punjab in India. A Faculty dinner was organised on the evening of Day 2 attended by the instructors. There was local sightseeing arranged by the Hospital doctors.

Teaching Materials
The standard EPM Workshop slides were used. 75 Certificates and Course manuals were handed out by the organising secretary. 10 Instructor manuals and certificates were distributed. Feedback forms were collected and are being analysed by Dr Patel.

Test Results
Course participants completed a 25-question test at the beginning and end of the workshop to assess learning during the day.
The overall average pretest score was
For nurses, the average pretest score was 15.8, increasing to 17.9 (13% increase from pretest value)
For Doctors, it was 19.5 to 23.3 (19.4% improvement)
For welfare officers, 12.5-17.1 (37% improvement)
The improvement of test scores amongst the Welfare Officers is noteworthy.

Feedback
Dr Rashmi Patel has offered to examine and comment on the Feedback received at all 3 workshops. She has verbally reported a very positive feedback. Documentation will be forwarded to EPM as soon as available.

Publicity / Other Activities
The workshop was featured on the local TV channels and there was a news item (with photograph, scanned and attached) in the local press.

Success and Relevance of Workshops
“The flame is very much alive” was the message from Dr Ajayakumar, an instructor who has participated in 2 workshops.
The workshops were very successful. We ran two one-day EPM Workshops and trained 75 healthcare workers including 10 instructors. The training of 10 instructors is noteworthy and demonstrates the enthusiasm of the group. Some of the instructors attended the EPM workshop in that region over the last year. It was reported that at least one EPM workshop for healthcare workers has taken place in the last 6 months conducted by a small group of instructors from the Idukki workshop. Barriers to Pain management and overcoming these barriers generated considerable discussion. The course has been very inexpensive to run.

**Recommendations**

1. **Run further workshops**
   - The Managing Director of the hospitals has suggested a plan to run one day workshops in peripheral hospitals, especially to include staff that were unable to attend this one.
   - There is also the possibility of running further 3-day workshops on other Tata estates in South India

**Acknowledgements**

We are very grateful to Dr Samuel Vijayakumar, the Managing Director of the Tata Global Beverages Hospital. He invited all the healthcare staff of this hospital to participate. Invitations were also sent to neighbouring regions/ hospitals/ dispensaries from where we received many participants. He was himself an enthusiastic presence at all 3 workshops. Of special note is the hospitality extended to us Instructors. We were made to feel very comfortable and well cared for. The accommodation and Catering were excellent.

Dr Harikumar who works as Anaesthetist at this hospital, and was the Organising Secretary did a sterling job in organising the event. As Instructors, we provided very little input into any aspect of the organisation, printing, venue, catering, transport (including sightseeing), were well taken care of. It was obvious that many months of preparation preceded the event.

A special mention must be made here.

Dr Kurian Thomas from Dubai attended this event at very short notice after one of the instructors from Australia withdrew. Dr Kurian is known to EPM and participated with a quiet enthusiasm, and demonstrated his considerable teaching skill.

Dr Ajayakumar, Anaesthetist and Superintendent of Adimali Hospitals took valuable time off his busy schedule to stay and actively instruct for 3 days. He was introduced to EPM a year ago and has remained involved and interested. He has offered his support for the future.

Dr Rashmi Patel from Perth was a valuable instructor and most appreciated by our participants. Thanks Dr Patel for traveling a great distance to be there.

We are very grateful to the young doctors and nurses at the front desk who volunteered their help without the opportunity to participate in the workshops themselves and so too the many hospital orderlies and company drivers that worked quietly in the background.

**Dr Ramesh Menon**

**Christchurch**