

Palliative Care Service

Introduction

The Palliative Care Service has programs in inpatient care, outpatient clinic and home care, consultation, research, volunteering, education and training. The goal of these six programs is to provide the highest possible quality of life for patients and their family members. Palliative care affirms life and regards dying as a natural process. Palliative care emphasizes relief from pain and other distressing symptoms. It integrates the physical, psychological, social and spiritual aspects of patient care, and offers a support system to help the patient live as actively as possible until his or her death and the family to cope with the stress they experience during the patient's illness and the bereavement period.

Routine Activities

The Palliative Care Service at the National Cancer Center Hospital East (NCCHE) comprises two divisions: the palliative care unit (PCU) for inpatients (25 beds) and the clinic for outpatients.

1. Inpatient care

A total of 265 patients were admitted to the PCU from January to December 2006. The most common reason for their admission was pain (42%), followed by fatigue (18%), loss of appetite (16%), dyspnea (10%), and nausea (8%). Annual changes in the number of inpatients in The PCU in

the past four years are shown in the Table.

2. Outpatient clinic

A patient who wishes to receive palliative care at our facility must first enroll and obtain an application from the outpatient clinic to confirm informed consent. The registration of 375 patients (229 males and 145 females) was completed at the Palliative Care Clinic in 2006. According to a survey of these patients, 330 (88%) were referred from other clinical departments at NCCHE, 10 (3%) from the National Cancer Center Hospital, Tokyo, and 35 (9%) from other medical institutions. Lung cancer was the commonest primary illness (80 patients: 21%), followed by head and neck cancer (75 patients: 20%), pancreatic cancer (61 patients: 16%), gastric cancer (40 patients: 11%), colorectal cancer (40 patients: 11%), esophageal cancer (36 patients: 10%) and breast cancer (25 patients: 7%). Of the 375 patients, 212 (57%) had been previously treated by surgery, 275 (73%) had undergone chemotherapy, and 158 (42%) had received radiotherapy. Following the first consultation, 310 (83%) of the 375 patients were registered on the outpatient list, and 65 (17%) were placed on the waiting list for admission.

● H. Kinoshita ●

Table number of patients treated at the PCU in 2003-2006

	2003	2004	2005	2006
Hospitalized	307	262	196	265
Discharged	283	258	182	259
Died	265	242	177	238
Survived	28	16	19	21