

GREECE



Population: 10,668,354

Current Directory:

Printed version

Online version

None identified x

Key Contact/National Association

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Palliative Care Services

NK = not known

Number of Palliative Care Services

	Inpatient Palliative Care Units	Hospices	Consultant Teams in Hospitals	Home Care Teams	Day Centres	Total
Adult/Children	0	0	20	9	3	32
Paediatric only	0	0	0	0	0	0
				Inpatient Palliative Care Units/	Chronic Hospitals /Nursing	Total



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	hospices	Homes	
Number of beds allocated to adult palliative care inpatients	NK	NK	NK
	Adults	Children	Total
Number of Bereavement Support Teams	3	2	5

Comments/Sources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In Greece, there are no officially established palliative care units - 95% of the estimated numbers are part of the Pain Centres of Anaesthesia Departments or of Oncology Departments and the 24-hour service offered by pain and palliative care specialists on a voluntary basis. • In 2000 the Jenny Karezi foundation donates a four floor building to the University of Athens, Department of Radiology, Pain Relief and Palliative Care Unit. This building includes a day care unit, an out-patient unit, a research room and a seminar/education area. • There are no beds specifically allocated to adult palliative care inpatients. There is no data relating to the exact number of beds available, but it is estimated that in every Oncology Department or Pain Centres of Anaesthesia Departments, at least exist the possibility of to have two or three beds available for palliative care inpatient. • Four of the home palliative care teams are inclusively rather than exclusively involved in home care. Although they provide palliative care at home, they are not exclusively involved in palliative care (two are included in general and oncological hospitals and two in municipalities). • There are no specialised palliative care units for children. Rather, they are treated in the Oncological Department of a children's hospital, and in some special cases they are referred to the Pain Relief and Palliative Care Unit at Areteion Hospital. Exist two or three societies and non-government organisations that are doing an effort in two national hospitals to organize palliative care centres, but at the moment this service is only offered on a voluntary basis by oncologists, anaesthesiologists, nurses and psychologists. • Bereavement support is mainly organised through volunteers. There are also a few non-government organizations for bereavement support. In Greece, bereavement support is provided through rituals and customs. More specifically, commemoration masses that take place after the death of a loved one help the bereaved to communicate and resolve their grief. Bereavement rituals have formed an important part of the Greek culture from ancient times until the present day. <p>[Documents of the <i>Hellenic Society of Palliative Symptomatic Care of Cancer and non-Cancer Patients</i> (HSPSCCNCP)]</p> <p>["Palliative Care Newsletter" of HSPSCCNCP]</p> <p>["Home Care Services in Greece" - abstract from the 4th International Scientific Conference of Bialystok, Poland 21-24 April, 2005]</p> <p>[1st Panhellenic Symposium for Palliative Care of the HSPSCCNCP, Athens 1998]</p> <p>[1st Symposium for Palliative Care of the HSPSCCNCP and IKA (Social Security Organization)]</p> <p>["Merimna" past President D. Papadatou]</p> <p>[Personal communication with the Consultant Anaesthetist of the Children's Hospital in Greece]</p> <p>[EAPC Palliative Care Facts in Europe Questionnaire 2005]</p>

Adult Palliative Care Population

85%	of patients receiving palliative care have a cancer diagnosis	
10%	of patients receiving palliative care have other incurable conditions	
	Cancer	(n)
Number of patients who die at home	NK	1305
Number of patients who die in a general hospital	NK	278
Number of patients who die in other healthcare institutions	NK	139



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Comments/Sources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Percentage of patients with cancer/non-cancer diagnosis receiving palliative care is an estimate only. <p>[Data collected from the Pain Relief and Palliative Care Centre of Aretaieion Hospital, University of Athens and other hospitals]</p> <p>["Home Care Services in Greece" - abstract from the 4th International Scientific Conference of Bialystok, Poland 21-24 April, 2005]</p> <p>[EAPC Palliative Care Facts in Europe Questionnaire 2005]</p>

Palliative Care Workforce Capacity			
	Full-time	Part-time	Total
Physicians	2	NK	2
Nurses	60	NK	60
Social Workers	NK	NK	30
Psychologists	2	NK	40
Physiotherapists	NK	NK	10
Occupational Therapists	NK	NK	10
Spiritual/Faith leaders	NK	NK	NK
Volunteers	NK	NK	NK

Comments/Sources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is no official data about physicians working part-time in palliative care in the Health System, there are several internists, general practitioners, and anaesthesiologists working in pain clinics, and some oncologists who work part-time in palliative care. There are also physicians working in private hospitals and in a few foundations or non-profit organizations in the field of palliative care. Many nurses who work in the oncological departments of general hospitals, as usually, also work part-time in palliative care. Oncological departments of general hospitals and oncological hospitals employ social workers, physiotherapists, occupational therapists and chaplains as part of their teams, working part-time with palliative care patients. All palliative care workforce capacity data are estimates only. There are no officially established palliative care nursing departments in Greece. However, there are four centres in Athens in national hospitals, two in private hospitals and three in other urban areas. It is not possible to estimate the numbers of volunteers because most of the people working in the field of palliative care in Greece are afforded volunteer status. The Greek Cancer Society has 73 chapters all over Greece comprising of more than 50,000 volunteers. <p>[University of Athens Faculty of Nursing, Greece]</p> <p>[Pain and Palliative Care Unit, Anaesthesiology department, University of Athens]</p> <p>[Greek Cancer Society]</p> <p>[Hellenic Society of Palliative and Symptomatic Care of Cancer and non Cancer Patients]</p> <p>[EAPC Palliative Care Facts in Europe Questionnaire 2005]</p>

Funding of palliative care services	
Total number of palliative care services funded by the government	6
Total number of palliative care services funded privately or by NGO's	9

Comments/Sources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Total number of palliative care services funded privately or by NGO's is an estimate only. There are estimated three palliative care services that are supported by a combination of private and public funds



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[Documents of HSPSCNCP]

[EAPC Palliative Care Facts in Europe Questionnaire 2005]

Perceived use of main opioids in palliative care

Order of frequency	Opioid	Estimated cost per month (€)
First opioid	Durogesic	NK
Second opioid	Morphine	NK
Third opioid	Morphine (slow release)	NK
Comments/Sources		
[EAPC Palliative Care Facts in Europe Questionnaire 2005]		

Key issues and challenges

- There are no officially established palliative care centres and the provision of palliative care is based on the voluntary services of anaesthesiologists, oncologist, psychologists, nurses etc. Palliative care services in primary, secondary and tertiary health care need to be developed and expanded. There is no support from the government and the people are not very well informed about palliative care.
- Accreditation of palliative care is required in some way.
- There are restrictions in prescribing opioids. There is an extensive bureaucracy that results in extensive delay in opioid administration (especially in non-cancer patients). Some strong opioids are not available in Greece; for example, buprenorfine and methadone.

[EAPC Palliative Care Euro-Barometer 2005]

Palliative care accreditation

- There is no medical specialization for palliative care in Greece. Since 1994, palliative care has been taught at the University of Athens as an elective subject only. At the beginning there were only 40 students and today there are more than 320. The further expansion of University curricula and training programmes in palliative care for health care professionals and medical students is of special importance for the development of the discipline in Greece

[EAPC Palliative Care Facts in Europe Questionnaire 2005]

Palliative care milestones

- 1994: The “Pain Relief and Palliative Care” course begins to be taught as an elective subject at the University of Athens.
- 1997: The *Hellenic Society of Palliative and Symptomatic Care of Cancer and non-Cancer patients* is established.
- 2000-2005: With the financial cooperation of the Jenny Karezi foundation a Pain Relief and Palliative Care Unit is open in the University of Athens in a separate building with a day care unit, an out-patient unit, a research room and a seminar/education area. They organize palliative care seminars for nurses and social workers within the municipality of Athens.
- 2004: The Pain Relief and Palliative Care Unit mark the publication of the

Council of Europe (2003) report on palliative care (Recommendation 24 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the organisation of palliative care) by translating and editing the report.

- 2005: The principle that Greek doctors are obliged to alleviate pain and offer quality of life through palliative care to terminally ill patients is established for the first time in Greek law.
- 2006: 8th Panhellenic Conference on Regional Anaesthesia, Pain Management & Palliative Care, with International Participation (Olympia, May 19-21, 2006).

[EAPC Palliative Care Euro-Barometer 2005]

Health policy

- *The Hellenic Society of Palliative and Symptomatic Care for Cancer and non-Cancer Patients* continues to make every effort to persuade the Greek government to establish an official pain relief and palliative care centre in every hospital.
- The Pain Relief and Palliative Care Unit and the School of Nursing at the University of Athens are in collaboration with the associations of oncologists/oncologist–radiotherapists, and the Minister of Health for the promotion of Palliative Care in Greece.
- Members of The Pain Relief and Palliative Care Unit of the University of Athens contributed with an article to comment in *Palliative Medicine* the position paper: “Euthanasia and physician-assisted suicide: a view from an EAPC Ethics Task Force”. *The Hellenic Society of Palliative and Symptomatic Care for Cancer and non-Cancer Patients* translate the position paper into Greek, and by discussing euthanasia at a workshop on palliative care in December 2005.
- The Pain Relief and Palliative Care Unit mark the publication of the Council of Europe (2003) report on palliative care (Recommendation 24 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the organisation of palliative care) by translating and editing the report.
- At the current time there are no initiatives in Greece that seek the legalisation of euthanasia or assisted suicide.

[EAPC Palliative Care Euro-Barometer 2005]

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N. B. This report has been compiled mainly from data provided by *The Hellenic Society of Palliative and Symptomatic Care for Cancer and non-Cancer Patients*, and from *Hellenic Association for Pain Control & Palliative Care*. Both organisations are National Associations and members of the EAPC. Other sources as a deep bibliographic search and several personal communications also were used.

Information correct as at: 30th August 2006

