

# Integrating palliative care into social work training

HPCA Webinar

26 Jan 2021

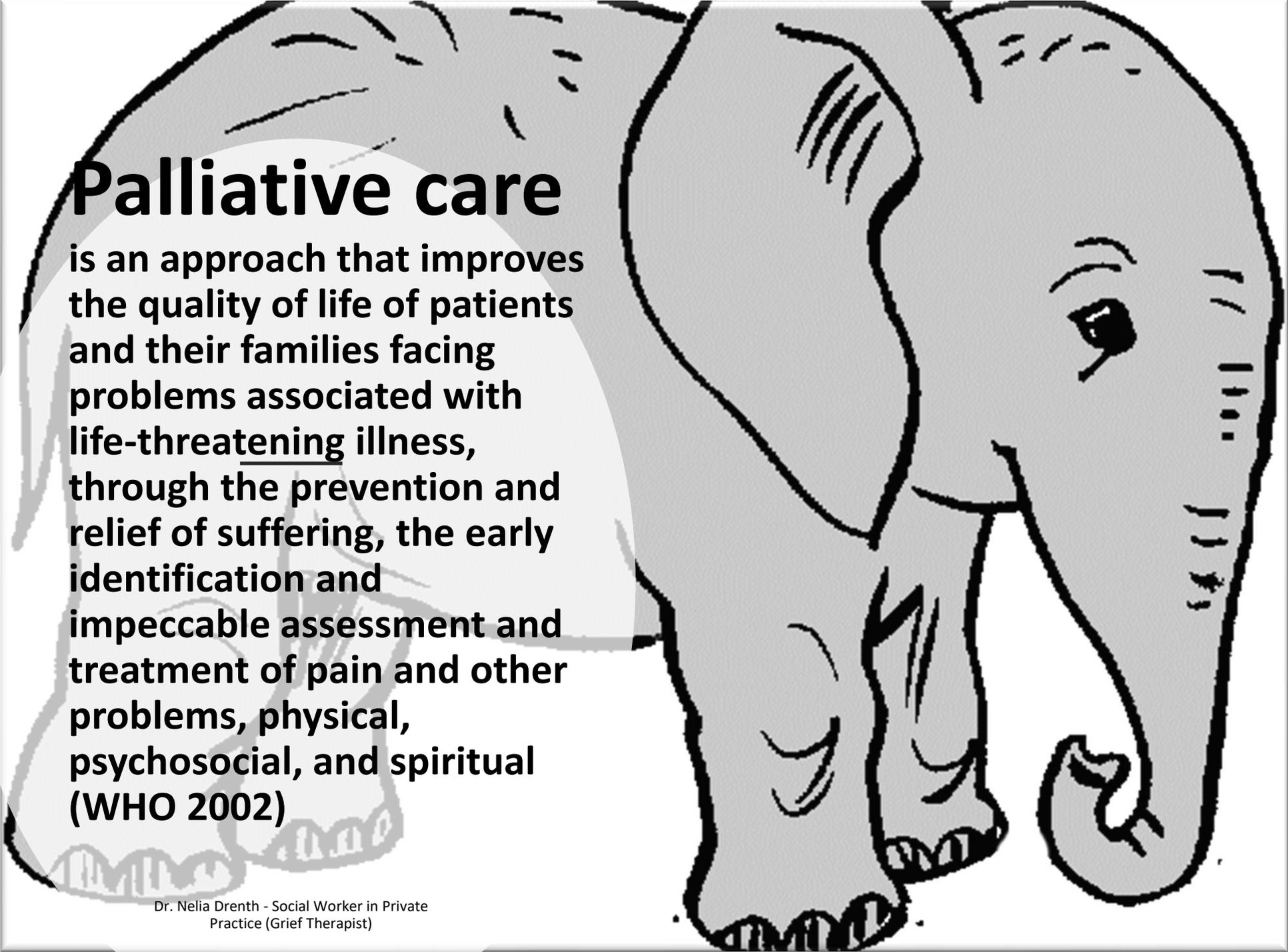
Dr Nelia Drenth – Social worker

<https://qualilifecare.com>

# Purpose of social work

*...to enhance the clients' social functioning, link them with resources, improve the social service delivery network and promote social justice.'* (DuBois and Miley, 2002)





# **Palliative care**

**is an approach that improves the quality of life of patients and their families facing problems associated with life-threatening illness, through the prevention and relief of suffering, the early identification and impeccable assessment and treatment of pain and other problems, physical, psychosocial, and spiritual (WHO 2002)**

# Some stats that should concern Social Workers (Global atlas)

- Globally: People in need of palliative care – 56.8 million
- 67.1% over 50; 7% children
- 76% live in LMICs (LMICs)
- 64% adults –Western Pacific, Africa and South East Asia
- Africa region – highest need
- 97%+ children 0-19 live in LMICs
- >50% of these in Africa

# The Role of a Palliative Social Worker

- Counseling and psychotherapy for individuals, couples, and families;
- Providing psychosocial education to patients and family caregivers about coping skills, hospice and palliative care, philosophy, and nonpharmacological symptom management strategies;
- Providing in-services to other service providers and organizations;
- Leading community education workshops;
- Planning for discharge, coordinating care, and helping clients navigate systems;
- Facilitating advance care planning and lifespan planning;
- Intervening in crises;
- Mediating conflicts within families, between clients and the interdisciplinary team, and between service organizations;
- Participating in interdisciplinary team meetings, care planning, and ethics consultations;
- Advocating on behalf of the patient and family;
- Identifying and linking clients with resources;
- Facilitating psychoeducational support groups; and
- Documenting social work activities.

# Barriers to Palliative Care

- Social workers lack palliative care knowledge and skills: 'giving up' on the patient
- Discrimination against minorities and disempowered groups such as refugees, prisoners and the homeless
- No hospices/palliative care services in rural areas
- Access to PC denied both to medical aid patients, and to more wealthy patients whose doctors choose to continue active treatment even when futile.
- Transport cost to health care facilities for seriously ill patients
- No Government subsidies for PC and professionals working in PC

# PALLIATIVE CARE AND SOCIAL WORKERS

- Disrupted family systems due to the life-threatening illness of a family member
- Homeless persons and those without financial means due to loss (child-headed families, women, elderly)
- Marital conflict due to death of a child
- COVID-19, HIV & AIDS, natural or human made disasters (Multiple losses)
- Juvenile delinquency as result of loss of parent, sibling or friend
- Substance abuse as result of loss of health and death
- Suicidal tendencies
- Stigmatized deaths, disenfranchised grief, complicated grief

# 4 QUESTIONS NEEDING ANSWERS

- Is loss through death included in the initial assessment of the client irrespective of the presented problem?
- What is the knowledge base of SA social workers regarding the impact of a life-threatening illness and death on the social functioning of the client and his family?
- Does the social worker have access to palliative care programmes and services?
- Is the social worker professionally equipped to address social problems caused by palliative care and bereavement?

# Training: What do we need?

- Palliative social work educational programs on undergraduate, master's, and doctoral levels
- Certificate programs
  - HPCA: Psychosocial palliative care course
  - NWU: 20 Week online course: Psychosocial interventions in end-of-life and bereavement care
- Conferences, seminars, and webinars
- Continuing Professional Development
  - In-person workshops
  - Online bereavement counselling <https://qualilifecare.teachable.com>
- Electronic discussion forums
- And many more

# References

- Altilio, T. & Otis-Green, S. (Eds). 2011. *Oxford textbook of palliative social work*. Oxford University Press. Oxford.
- Hospice Palliative Care Association of SA (HPCA). 2012. *Legal aspects of palliative care*. HPCA/Open Society Foundation. Cape Town.
- Lawson, R. 2012. Palliative social work in the emergency department. *Journal of Social Work in End-of-life & Palliative Care*. Taylor & Francis Group. Vol 8:120-134.
- National Association of Social Workers (NASW). 2004. *NASW standards for palliative care and end-of-life care*. NASW. Washington, DC.
- Truell, R., & Crompton, S. 2019. *To the top of the cliff. How social work changed with COVID-19*. International Association of Social Workers. Rheinfelden, Switzerland.
- WHPCA. 2020. *Global atlas of palliative care. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed*. Worldwide Hospice Palliative Care Alliance. London.