



## Assessing Knowledge and Attitude Regarding Palliative Care Among Staff Nurses at King George's University, Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh.

*Mrs. Sarita Pandey<sup>1</sup>, Nikki Sharma<sup>2</sup>, Mansi Mishra<sup>3</sup>, Neelu<sup>4</sup>, Parul Mishra<sup>5</sup>, Nitish Chaurasiya<sup>6</sup>, Owais Jamal Lone<sup>7</sup>, Neha Singh<sup>8</sup>, Neha Singh<sup>9</sup>, Neetu Verma<sup>10</sup>*

<sup>1</sup>Tutor at KGMU College of Nursing (saritadubey@kgmacindia.edu)

<sup>2-10</sup>B.Sc. Nursing Students

<sup>2</sup>nikkijamdagni7776@gmail.com, <sup>3</sup>mansimishra0511@gmail.com, <sup>4</sup>neelumall37@gmail.com, <sup>5</sup>pm3570076@gmail.com,

<sup>6</sup>nitishchaurasiya1998@gmail.com, <sup>7</sup>loneowais523@gmail.com, <sup>8</sup>singhneha7565@gmail.com, <sup>9</sup>ns367875@gmail.com, <sup>10</sup>nv6827999@gmail.com

### ABSTRACT:

The European Association for Palliative Care (EAPC) defines palliative care as the comprehensive care of patients whose conditions are not amenable to curative treatment. This holistic, interdisciplinary approach aims to enhance the quality of life for patients with progressive, life-threatening diseases, where the likelihood of remission or stabilization is minimal. Palliative care is essential for a variety of chronic diseases, with a significant proportion of adults requiring such care suffering from conditions like cardiovascular diseases (38.5%), cancer (34%), chronic respiratory diseases (10.3%), AIDS (5.7%), and diabetes (4.6%). Pain and dyspnea are among the most common and severe symptoms faced by patients in need of palliative care.

**Objectives:** 1. To evaluate the knowledge and attitudes of staff nurses regarding palliative care at King George's Medical University, Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh.

2. To investigate the relationship between knowledge and attitudes among staff nurses and selected sociodemographic variables.

**Methodology:** A descriptive research design utilizing convenient sampling techniques and a self-structured validated questionnaire on palliative care was employed. The study population consisted of staff nurses at King George's Medical University, with a sample size of 100 participants selected through convenient sampling.

**Results:** Data analysis revealed that 35% of participants exhibited good knowledge, 63% demonstrated average knowledge, and only 2% had poor knowledge. Furthermore, 77% of nurses displayed a positive attitude, while 8% had a negative attitude, and 5% maintained a neutral stance. These findings suggest that nurses generally possess a positive attitude towards palliative care.

**Keywords:** Staff Nurse, Knowledge, Attitude, Palliative Care

### Introduction:

Palliative care significantly enhances the quality of life for patients and their families facing the challenges of life-threatening illnesses, encompassing physical, psychological, social, and spiritual dimensions. Annually, an estimated 56.8 million individuals, including 25.7 million in their final year of life, require palliative care, yet only about 14% currently receive it globally. Palliative care encompasses a spectrum of services provided by various professionals, including physicians, nurses, support workers, paramedics, pharmacists, physiotherapists, and volunteers, all playing vital roles in supporting patients and their families. Nurses, in particular, are integral to the palliative care team, coordinating care across different professional levels and ensuring high standards of care due to their prolonged interactions with patients. Enhancing knowledge through education and retraining among healthcare professionals, especially nurses, is crucial for improving the quality of palliative care services.

### Need for the Study:

A study conducted by Thushan W, Nayana G, Suresh M, and Lahiru U (2023) assessed the knowledge and attitudes regarding palliative care among nurses in Sri Lanka, revealing that over half of the participants (55%) had inadequate knowledge (<50% on the PCKT score). However, a significant majority (92%) viewed nursing care for dying patients as a valuable experience. Similarly, a study by Maria Dimoula et al. (2018) involving undergraduate nursing students indicated low levels of knowledge about palliative care, although a majority expressed positive attitudes towards end-of-life care.

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**Statement of the Problem:**

This study aims to assess the knowledge and attitudes regarding palliative care among staff nurses at King George's Medical University, Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh.

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**Objectives:**

1. To evaluate the knowledge of staff nurses regarding palliative care at King George's Medical University.
2. To assess the attitudes of staff nurses regarding palliative care at King George's Medical University.
3. To explore the association between knowledge and attitudes among staff nurses and selected sociodemographic variables.

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**Methodology:**

A quantitative research approach with a descriptive design was employed. The study was conducted at King George Medical University, specifically at the Gandhi Memorial and Associate Hospital, Lucknow, U.P. The target population included staff nurses present during the study period, selected through convenient sampling.

**Inclusion Criteria:**

- Nurses willing to provide informed consent to participate in the study.
- Registered Nurses with a professional degree recognized by state or central government.

**Exclusion Criteria:**

- Nurses unavailable during data collection.
- Nurses who refuse to participate.

An informed consent was obtained from all participants.

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**Description of Tools:**

**1. Demographic Performa:** A questionnaire assessing demographic characteristics, including age, gender, educational qualification, employment status, working experience, monthly income, previous knowledge of palliative care, source of information, and area of posting.

**2. Structured Knowledge Questionnaire:** A tool consisting of 33 items assessing knowledge related to palliative care.

**3. Structured Attitude Tool:** A tool comprising 13 items evaluating attitudes towards palliative care among nursing staff, utilizing a Likert scale with scores assigned for agreement.

**Ethical Considerations:** The study was reviewed and ethically approved by the university's ethical committee. Content validity was established through validation by five nursing experts in medical-surgical nursing and palliative care. Reliability was confirmed using the split-half method.

**Pilot Study:** A pilot study was conducted following permissions from KGMU College of Nursing and relevant department heads. Written consent was obtained, and confidentiality was maintained for all participants. The sample size for the pilot study was 100 staff nurses.

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**Analysis and Interpretation of Data:**

The analysis was based on data collected through the Socio-demographic Performa, knowledge assessment questionnaire, and Likert scale for attitude assessment from 100 staff nurses. The findings were organized under the following sections:

**Section I:** Sample Characteristics

**Section II:** Knowledge Assessment Findings

**Section III:** Attitude Assessment Findings

**Section IV:** Association between Knowledge Scores and Demographic Variables

**Section V:** Association between Attitude Scores and Demographic Variables

**Section I:** Sample Characteristics

The gender distribution indicated that 60% of participants were female, while 40% were male. Educationally, 62% had graduated, 23% were postgraduates, and 15% held diplomas. Most participants (67%) had less than 5 years of experience, followed by 27% with 6-10 years. The primary sources of knowledge were other sources (29%), books (27%), and research studies/seminars/internet (23%).

**Table 1: Distribution of Subjects According to Area of Posting (n=100)**

| Sr. No. | Area Of Posting | Frequency | Percentage |

Sr. No.	Area Of Posting	Frequency	Percentage
1	Clinical Hematology	10	10%
2	General Medicine ICU	5	5%
3	Medical Oncology	17	17%
4	NICU	6	6%
5	Palliative Care (Radiotherapy)	1	1%
6	Pediatric Oncology	5	5%
7	PICU	9	9%
8	Radiotherapy Female Ward	24	24%
9	Radiotherapy Male Ward	11	11%
10	Surgery Postoperative	7	7%
11	Surgical Oncology	4	4%
12	Surgical Oncology (Post Op)	1	1%
**Total**		**100**	**100%**

Among the 100 subjects, the highest number of cases were from the Radiotherapy Female Ward (24%), followed by the Medical Oncology Department (17%).

## Section II:

### Palliative Care Management Questionnaire

The distribution of knowledge revealed that the highest correct responses were for questions regarding the definition of palliative care and its provision (94%), while the lowest was for the question on when palliative care should begin (30%). Overall, 63% of participants had average knowledge, 35% had good knowledge, and 2% had poor knowledge.

The distribution of nurses' attitudes indicated that the highest positive response was for the question regarding patient involvement in decision-making (95%), while the lowest was for discussing impending death with patients (36%). Overall, 77% of nurses exhibited a positive attitude, 8% had a negative attitude, and 5% were neutral.

## Section III:

### Association between Knowledge and Attitude Scores with Demographic Variables

- The findings indicated that 63% of participants had average knowledge, 35% had good knowledge, and 2% had poor knowledge. The mean knowledge score was highest (82.77) in the 36-45 age group, followed by 80.88 in those over 45, and 67.59 in the 26-35 age group, with the lowest score (60.50) in those under 25.
- Regarding gender, the mean knowledge score was highest (73.03) among females, compared to 60.44 for males. In terms of work experience, the highest mean knowledge score (78.92) was observed among those with over 10 years of experience, followed by 76.9 for those with 6-10 years, and the lowest (63.43) for those with less than 5 years.
- The highest mean knowledge score (80.11) was found among regular (government) employees, followed by 79.83 for contractual employees, and the lowest (63.31) for regular (KGMU) employees.
- In terms of age, the mean attitude score was highest (75.66) among staff over 45 years, followed by 67.55 for the 36-45 age group, and 62.45 for the 26-35 age group, with the lowest score (53.52) for those under 25. Chi-square analysis indicated a statistically significant difference in mean attitude scores at  $p < 0.05$ , suggesting that age significantly impacts staff nurses' attitudes towards palliative care.

- For gender, the mean attitude score was highest (78.12) among female staff, compared to 66.32 for male staff, with a statistically significant difference at  $p < 0.05$ . Educational qualification also influenced attitudes, with the highest mean score (80.12) among postgraduates and the lowest (70.56) among diploma holders, again showing statistical significance at  $p < 0.05$ .
- In terms of occupation, the highest mean attitude score (81.45) was found among contractual staff, followed by 78.23 for regular (government) staff, and the lowest (68.45) for regular (KGMU) staff, with statistical significance at  $p < 0.05$ .
- Regarding monthly income, the highest mean attitude score (72.45) was among those earning over Rs. 50,000, followed by 69.12 for those earning less than Rs. 20,000, and 67.32 for those earning between Rs. 10,001 and Rs. 35,000, with the lowest score (65.45) for those earning between Rs. 35,001 and Rs. 50,000, showing statistical significance at  $p < 0.05$ .

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### **Recommendations:**

Based on the study results, the following recommendations are proposed:

- (a) Enhance patient satisfaction regarding nursing palliative care and approaches in clinical settings.
- (b) Conduct further research on spiritual intelligence and spiritual care in palliative care, promoting evidence-based practices and innovations in patient care.
- (c) Implement specialized training programs, workshops, seminars, and continuing education in palliative care, ensuring easy access to up-to-date clinical practice guidelines, protocols, and resources.

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### **Summary:**

This quantitative research study aimed to assess the knowledge and attitudes regarding palliative care among staff nurses at KGMU, Lucknow, U.P. The study involved 100 participants selected through convenient sampling, with data collected via a socio-demographic Performa, a Likert scale for attitude assessment, and a knowledge assessment questionnaire. The findings indicated that 35% of staff nurses had good knowledge, 63% had average knowledge, and 2% had poor knowledge. The results underscore the need for improved access to clinical practice guidelines and resources related to palliative care.