

BOOK REVIEW

Palliative Care: Perspectives, Practices and Impact on Quality of Life. A Global View, Volume 1

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“When my colleagues first heard about ‘good quality of life’, they laughed saying we all need good quality of life! They thought that palliative care is a luxury; that here we have to give basic oncology services and palliative care is something only well-off countries can have. That it is waste of time and waste of resources. The truth was so far away. Palliative care is basic; it is the root of our medical practice, our medical ethics and the root of the Hippocratic Oath. Palliative care is so much cost-effective and essential to the patients who need it.”

This is part of the introduction to a contribution from Sudan but in different ways is echoed by all the authors of this multi-author book of 629 pages representing 30 countries. Outwardly it is very daunting, especially as this is only Volume 1! However, in reality, it is a wide-ranging sweep of palliative care, as it is practised in different countries of the world with different challenges, financial and cultural; all written by those who are passionate about palliative care and feel that palliative care most certainly is not a luxury.

As a retired palliative care physician from the UK now travelling overseas with a medical education charity, the book provides a huge number of helpful insights. There is something for everyone here, from the challenges in the US of providing palliative care to those with severe mental illness to the challenges of providing basic palliative care in extremely resource-poor countries and in countries grappling with the lack of access to opioids.

I found the case histories scattered through the different chapters are the most compelling, showing as they do the benefits that good quality palliative care can provide to those in all sorts of different situations. However, it was also clear that no matter the culture and the setting the need for good quality palliative care is universal.

I wholeheartedly recommend this book which should definitely find a place on the bookshelf of all those with a global perspective of palliative care but also be of great interest providing fresh insights to all providing palliative care in their own settings.

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Palliative Care Coordinator for PRIME Partnerships in International Medical Education, an educational charity committed to integrating rigorous science and compassionate care for the whole person, last year providing 56 education programmes in 23 countries.