

An Indian Perspective of Community Involvement in Palliative Care

Dr Tom Middlemiss
Research Fellow
09/09/09

Kerala, South India





Neighbourhood Network of Palliative Care

"Kerala, India: A Regional Community-Based Palliative Care Model"

Suresh K. Kumar,
J Pain Symptom Manage 2007;33:623-627

"The evolution of palliative care programmes in north Kerala"

Anil Paleri, Mathews Numpeli
Indian J Palliative Care, June 2005, Vol. 11, Issue 1



Palliative Care For All











This doc pedalled 1,600 kms to spread message of hope

Madhavi Rajadhyaksha | 15N

Mumbai: Cycling from one state to another for days on end might be a dream many harbour, but for UK palliative care expert Thomas Middlemiss, it wasn't just an adventure. The 30-year-old, who cycled 1,600 kms from Trivandrum to Mumbai on a 10-gear bicycle, was spreading the word and the message of hope for terminally-ill cancer patients along the way.

"Freedom from avoidable pain and suffering is a basic human right", was the message Middlemiss carried as he stopped along the route promoting the importance of palliative care. A much-ignored field, palliative care involves care of terminally-ill patients and strives to make their last days as comfortable as possible.

Cancer specialists from Tata Memorial Hospital, which offers palliative care services, estimate that 70% of the 2.5 million persons diagnosed with



MAN ON A MISSION

CANCER CARE

- Tata Memorial Centre established its Palliative Care Services in 1996
- Palliative care includes pain management, nursing, psycho-social support for patients and their families, financial aid and grief counselling
- There are 137 palliative care centres in India

cancer every year in the country require palliative care but less than 0.4% get it.

That's the gap Middlemiss tried to bridge as he pedalled along. He worked for six months in Trivandrum before setting out on his expedition on June 13. He reached the Gateway of India on Thursday.

"Many people thought cycling from Trivandrum to Mumbai was impossible, as impossible as fighting a life-threatening condition. But, just like the trip, the fight against cancer possible," Middlemiss said. He pointed out that he realised en route the lack of any palliative care facilities in tourist hub Goa.

"Raising awareness among doctors is one of our most important jobs," he added. Saying he had flagged off an initiative, the Britisher hoped an Indian member of the palliative care community would travel the route every year to carry forward his message of hope.

Cycling for a cause



British physician Thomas Middlemiss (30) hops off his bicycle at Gateway of India on Thursday evening, after pedalling for 1,600 kms over the last 15 days.

Middlemiss, palliative care specialist, had started his journey from Thiruvananthapuram on June 13 and cycled through many cities and towns to spread awareness about palliative care - treatment to help terminally ill patients.

His message: Freedom from avoidable pain and suffering is a basic human right.

Many people thought that cycling from Thiruvananthapuram to Mumbai was impossible just like the challenge of cancer. My journey has shown that it is possible, said Middlemiss.

He decided to undertake this journey as palliative care reaches only 0.4 per cent of the approximately 17.5 lakh Indian cancer patients, who are not responding to curative treatment.

