

## REPORT

European Society for Medical Oncology accepted Grants program for palliative care (additional experience in palliative care research, allowing recipients to spend at least one month of observation and research at one of the ESMO Designated Centers of Integrated Oncology and Palliative Care), gave me the opportunity to spend one month at the Shaare Zedek Medical Centre, Jerusalem, Israel (December, 2007) under the supervision of Dr. Nathan I. Cherny.

To be one of the ESMO grant holders is a great honor not only for me, but for my country as well. It gave me the unique chance to observe one of the ESMO Designated Centers and improve my knowledge and practical skills of the integration of palliative care in medical oncology practice.

Pain relief and palliative care is one of the major unaddressed public health problems in my country. In Georgia, there are over 43,000 deaths per year, and over 25,000 persons per year (60%) in need of palliative care. This is probably one of the reasons why the last stage of cancer pathology has the highest percentage and why the palliative care of cancer patients is of the greatest importance. It is very important to develop the competence as a palliative medicine specialist in oncology practice.

Dr. Cherny recognized my needs and outlook from the grant program and made every effort possible to help me realize them. The multidisciplinary team of Shaare Zedek Medical Centre were extremely helpful at familiarising me with the new culture, communications, and understanding of their integration in palliative medicine.

During the working day with Dr. Cherny I attended inpatient daily rounds, morning conferences, outpatients and day clinic patient follow-up, discussions, family meetings and educational presentations. Dr. Cherny tried to explain not only every patient treatment and their follow up, but also tried to improve my knowledge and experience of communicating with patients and their family members. He explained the key topics in information and bad news sharing, symptoms assessment and building of treatment strategy plans for cancer patients.

Dr. Cherny successfully showed that palliative and supportive care should always be integrated in anticancer therapy, but the oncologist should be aware that even patients with advanced cancer benefit from anticancer therapy. Each patient has individual feelings and needs, and sometimes these are far from our own expectations, organizational needs and therapeutic approaches. I realized that palliative care incorporates a multidisciplinary approach focused on the patients' quality of life and ability to cope, as well as that of the patients' family. The delivery of high-quality supportive and palliative care requires cooperation and coordination with physicians of other disciplines (radiotherapy, surgery, rehabilitation, psycho-oncology, pain medicine and anesthesiology and palliative medicine) as well as with paramedical clinicians (including nurses, social workers, psychologists, physical and occupational therapists, chaplains and others).

To follow Dr. Cherny and the multidisciplinary team was very helpful and useful. Participating on daily rounds of the inpatient ward, following patients' appointments, planning and delivery of palliative care, attendance at meetings and discussion with other physicians and members of interdisciplinary teams were useful and oriented to my needs, and at the same time significantly helped me improve my knowledge of medical oncology and palliative medicine. Participation at meetings with patient's family members gave me the experience to learn about different cultures and improve my communication skills with patients and their close relatives.



Discussions with Dr. Cherny regarding the medical Oncology, Palliative Care implementation, their integration and current problems in this field in Georgia, realize the possibilities and real ways for their resolution. Share the experience with colleagues in Shaare Zedek Medical Centre shows the real possibilities for future cooperation with Georgian colleagues in Medical Oncology and Palliative Medicine as well.

During my visit I had the opportunity to understand the importance of the role of nurses and other multidisciplinary team members (such as alternative medicine) in supportive and palliative care.

In accordance with my grant application, following my visit to the Shaare Zedek Medical Centre in Georgia I organized a presentation and open discussion about my trip and experience in palliative care integration in medical oncology practice and the importance of patients' needs based supportive care at the National Cancer Centre for health professionals working in palliative care in Tbilisi and one of the regional hospital.



During the presentation we discussed the importance of palliative care integration in medical oncology practice, current problems in this field in Georgia and possible ways to improve them.

Following the grant program, I continue to practice palliative care as an integral member of the hospice and palliative care team at the home-care-mobile-team of Palliative Care Association "Humanists' Union" as well as at the National Cancer Centre of Tbilisi, Georgia and we are starting to integrate medical oncology and palliative medicine in this way. Improving the knowledge of palliative care will help to increase awareness and the importance of palliative care and its integration in medical oncology practice.



Finally, I would like to thank the ESMO board for making the grant program possible, and for giving me the brilliant opportunity to be one of the observatory visitors at one of ESMO's Design Centers. Many thanks also to Dr. Cherny for cordially hosting me and to the staff at the Shaare Zedek Medical Centre for their support and making me feel not so far from home and for sharing their knowledge and experience in medical oncology, palliative and supportive care.

Myself and team wish and hope to continue cooperating with Dr. Cherny and his team in the future.

Many thanks to all of you for everything you have done for me!

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