



ACTIVITY REPORT 2015-16

Ganga Prem Hospice

Care and comfort for the terminally ill



A charitable project of the Shradha Cancer Care Trust



What Is Ganga Prem Hospice?



Ganga Prem Hospice is a spiritually-orientated, charitable hospice for terminally ill cancer patients. The Hospice provides medical, social, emotional and spiritual support for individuals and their loved ones as they face life threatening cancer, and in their ongoing grief.

Ganga Prem Hospice has been created to add other dimensions to the concept of hospice—the dimensions of spiritual care and holistic treatment. Ganga Prem Hospice exemplifies a fusion between medical care and spiritual perception. Eminent oncologists from Delhi have joined with spiritual seekers and holistic therapists in the Rishikesh area to alleviate the physical and emotional pain of cancer patients and their grieving families.

The Hospice is being constructed in a village called Gohri Maphi, in Raiwala. The village is situated at the foot of the Himalayas near to the town of Rishikesh, which is known for its spiritual culture and the many well-developed holistic centres.

THE CONCEPT OF A HOSPICE

A hospice provides palliative care to chronic and terminally ill patients, aiming to help control their pain and other symptoms so that they can achieve the best possible quality of life and death. A hospice offers personal and caring service to both patients and their loved ones by providing information, comfort and basic care.

At Ganga Prem Hospice, staff, volunteers, therapists, social workers, spiritual advisers and nurses assist doctors in providing medical and holistic care to terminally ill cancer patients. All

facets of the patient's life—the physical, social, emotional and spiritual, are considered to be of importance. Trained in patient-centred terminal care techniques, staff and volunteers understand that each patient and his needs are unique.

Hospices provide solace and comfort to patients and their families and help them to adjust to the many challenges and losses they face in the terminal phases of cancer. Often holistic by nature, palliative care can provide pain relief, symptom control and support at the time when it is most needed. After death, the hospice extends care to family and friends of the patient during their bereavement. In some cases, where the patient's families are destitute, an attempt is made to rehabilitate the family in case of the patient's death.



A hospice can provide care both through inpatient facility and home care service. It offers the possibility of a dignified death with minimal distress.

Our Activities

MONTHLY CHARITABLE CANCER CLINICS IN RISHIKESH

Ganga Prem Hospice holds a charitable monthly cancer clinic in Rishikesh. The clinic is held on the last Sunday of every month at the charitable Sardarni Nanki Devi-Punjab Sindh Kshetra Charitable Hospital, in Rishikesh. Ganga Prem Hospice medical director and surgical oncologist Dr AK Dewan, accompanied by other oncologists, gynaecologists, general physicians, and an Ayurvedacharya sees an average of 70-90 patients at each clinic. The clinic begins at 9.00 am and finishes between 2.00 pm and 3.00 pm.

Most patients who come to the clinic are from lower-income brackets. Many people who come are already suffering from cancer and many more come with suspected cancer symptoms. New cases of cancer are generally diagnosed at clinics and the patients are directed to the correct procedures. Medicines are distributed free-of-charge at the clinic to under-privileged patients.



The Ganga Prem Hospice charitable cancer clinics are held on the last Sunday of every month in Rishikesh.

The Ganga Prem Hospice monthly charitable cancer clinics in Rishikesh offer:

- Screening of patients for signs of cancer;
- Oncological consultation for cancer patients;
- Counselling for cancer patients, terminally ill patients, and their families;
- Free of charge distribution of medicines;
- Guided meditation sessions;
- Palliative care for terminally ill patients;
- Free of charge essential oils massage;
- Pick up and drop back vehicle service for terminally ill patients when needed.

PERIODIC CANCER CLINICS IN OTHER TOWNS/CITIES

In addition to the monthly cancer clinics in Rishikesh, additional clinics are held periodically in other towns and cities of Uttarakhand. The medical team travels to these cities often on the day before the monthly Rishikesh clinic, or sometimes in the middle of the month. These cancer clinics are held in hospitals and other premises, donated by supporters of the Hospice project.

HOME CARE SERVICE FOR THE TERMINALLY ILL

Ganga Prem Hospice has run a full-time home care service for terminally ill cancer patients since the year 2010. Patients in the geographical areas of Rishikesh, Haridwar and Dehradun are visited twice a week or more frequently, as per their needs, by the Ganga Prem Hospice nurses, and sometimes also by visiting doctors, nurses, and complementary therapists.

The visits provide medical, social, emotional and spiritual support to the patient and their families. Under-privileged patients' immediate needs, like that of food, nutrition and clothing are also assessed and help reached to them accordingly.

The home care service provides:

- Regular visits to patient's home by a:
 - A palliative care nurse;
 - A palliative care doctor;
 - Complementary therapist (whenever possible);
 - Counsellor (whenever possible);
 - General volunteer (whenever possible);
- Medical care for patient as advised by oncologist/palliative care practitioner;
- Complementary therapies for symptom relief and relaxation for both patient and family;
- Counselling for patient and family;
- Spiritual support for patient and family;
- General support for patient and family.

THE SUPPORT-A-CANCER-PATIENT SCHEME

The Support-a-Cancer-Patient Scheme gives donors an opportunity to sponsor cancer treatment or palliative care treatment for financially underprivileged cancer patients. Ganga Prem Hospice social workers assess applicants for benefit from this scheme and patients who are chosen, have their diagnostic tests or treatment arranged for by the Hospice. In addition to sponsoring tests and treatment, the Support-a-Cancer-Patient Scheme ensures that the chosen patient and his family receive other basic essentials that they need such as food, clothing, and other provisions.



The Support-a-Cancer-Patient Scheme provides:

- Sponsorship of treatment and medicines' cost;
- Nutritional support;

- Transport service for treatment;
- Other financial support according to need (e.g., clothing, house rent).

BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT

The bereavement support service gives much needed support to family and friends after the patient has died. The support, in select cases, continues until the loved ones feel it is no longer needed.

The bereavement support service provides:

- Help with practical arrangements after the death of patient;
- Counselling—helping family members manage the process of grieving;
- A promise of continued support, if required.



Ganga Prem Hospice Charitable Cancer Clinics: 2015-16



During the year 2015-16, Ganga Prem Hospice organised thirteen cancer clinics in all, with a clinic being organised in the town of Roorkee for the first-ever time, in addition to the monthly charitable clinics in Rishikesh. With **1,362** patients served, the average number of patients per clinic was **104**.

The Ganga Prem Hospice charitable cancer clinics continued to be held for the eighth successive year on the last Sunday of every month at the Sardarni Nanki Devi-Punjab Sindh Kshetra charitable hospital in Rishikesh. The thirteen clinics held during the year 2015-16 served a total of 1362 patients with nine of the clinics being attended by more than

100 patients.

Of these patients 554 had cancer and another forty-five were suspected of having the disease and sent for further diagnostic tests. The trend of having more patients with cancer attend the clinics and fewer general patients has continued over the past few years rewarding the efforts of the Hospice to reach out and help cancer patients in the Uttarakhand area. Of the cancer patients 117 were terminally ill and most of them were provided with GPH Home Care services. Those who lived too far away to be visited were able to consult with the team over the telephone with appropriate medicines then sent to them by public transport.

Age Groups of Patients At Charitable Cancer Clinics

Although 64% of patients attending the clinic were between the ages of 41 and 70, there were still a high number of young people, 53 patients being under the age of 20 with another 97 patients between the ages of 21 and 30.

Male patients were in the majority accounting for 59% of the total patients, but female patient attendance was not far behind. Among the women patients there were eighty-five cases of breast cancer, making it the most common type of cancer seen at the clinic. There were also fourteen cases of ovarian cancer and ten cases of cervical cancer. The male patients were suffering primarily from head and neck cancers, (31% of all cancers seen at the clinic) many of the cases resulting from alcohol, tobacco or gutka abuse.

Demographic Range of Patients At Ganga Prem Hospice Cancer Clinics

With the regular clinic being held in Rishikesh, 58% of the patients attending the clinic were from Rishikesh itself; another 15% had travelled from Dehradun to see the oncologists and 7% were from the nearby city of Haridwar. Ninety-six patients (7%) had made the difficult journey from towns and villages in the Himalayas while 13% had come from various towns in the plains. Most of the patients from the plains had come from Uttar Pradesh towns bordering the state of Uttarakhand.

Doctors of Different Specialities At Ganga Prem Hospice Charitable Cancer Clinic Service

Sixteen doctors served the patients at the free cancer clinics throughout the year and of these doctors fifteen were volunteers. The doctors included three oncologists, four palliative care specialists, one onco-psychiatrist, two gynaecologists, one ENT specialist, three dentists, one ayurvedaacharya and one general doctor. The service of dentists at the clinic was a new introduction this year and found immensely helpful to the patients suffering from oral cancers. Nine of the doctors came from the local area, four travelled from Delhi to serve at the clinic while three were from other countries. Two nurses and a nursing assistant employed by the Hospice assisted the doctors at the clinics.

As well as the volunteer doctors other volunteers helping out at the clinic included student nurses, therapists, two dieticians, two pharmacists and many general volunteers who helped with the clinic arrangements and general care of patients and their families. The volunteers came from all walks of life and included professionals, academics, business men, students, housewives and even renunciates. Most of the volunteers were local people while a few came from other cities or states and approximately fifteen were from overseas.

Ganga Prem Hospice administration staff took responsibility for the smooth running of the clinics as well the preparatory work locally, advertising, registration, patient data collection, patient follow up procedures and media reporting work.

The Rishikesh clinics were all held at the Punjab Sindh Kshetra and Nanki Devi Sardarni Charity Hospital where all the facilities were provided free of charge. The clinic's closest neighbours, the Rajsthani Mithan Bandhar continued to donate drinks and refreshments for everyone attending

the clinic and were often emulated by other individual supporters who distributed fruits and other refreshments to the patients.

Guided meditation sessions were held at the clinics which were attended by patients and carers as well as GPH staff and volunteers. The ambience at the clinics was always notably loving and caring transforming a difficult and potentially very sad atmosphere into somewhere where patients and their families felt supported to the extent that many regular patients spoke of how much they looked forward to the clinics.




The Ganga Prem Hospice Home Care Service



During the year 2015-16 an additional team was created allowing three Ganga Prem Hospice home care teams to visit patients with advanced cancer in their own homes and provide palliative care. As well as medical treatment and nursing care the teams provide social, emotional and spiritual support to both the patients and their families at a time when help is desperately needed but rarely found in the north of India.

Over the past years the Hospice Home Care Programme has gradually expanded its service to help more and more patients; from the early days in 2007 when two or three patients were visited in their homes until this year, 2015-16, when **173** patients with advanced cancer received home care. With two and later three full time nurses, a part time palliative care doctor and visiting volunteer doctors, nurses and therapists, Ganga Prem Hospice was able to have at least two or three teams visiting patients at any one time.



In the year 2015-16, **173** patients with advanced cancer received home care from Ganga Prem Hospice palliative care nurses.
All services were rendered free-of-charge.

Ninety-five of home care patients were from Dehradun, fifty-five from GPH's home town, Rishikesh, and twenty-one from Haridwar. Another two patients were visited in their homes in the Himalayan region. In March of 2016, seeing the urgent need for home care in the Uttarakhand capital of Dehradun, the Board of Shradha Cancer Care Trust passed a resolution to keep one of the Hospice vehicles in Dehradun and to hire a third driver. With an ambulance stationed in Dehradun the time taken up in travel from Rishikesh to Dehradun was saved and the Dehradun based Home Care team could even visit patients on the far side of the city which until then had taken too much time to reach and so could not be included in the schedule. The number of patients visited in March shot up to 73 from a previous high of 54. The number of visits carried out also increased substantially reaching 294 during March. **During the whole year 2,584 home care visits were carried out by the Hospice Home Care teams.**

Sadly 20% of the home care patients were under the age of forty and included six children and eight young people in their twenties. Three of the young patients served during the year were well enough to enjoy special days out and a number of events and outings were arranged by GPH during the winter to help make their days brighter. These special times included a Christmas party, a concert by Krishna Das, two birthday parties, a picnic outing and an outing to the cinema as well as some fun home care visits to fulfill 'last wishes'. Two of the young people related the poignant stories of their journeys with cancer at the palliative care training course that Ganga Prem Hospice held in November of 2015. Patients between the ages of 51 and 70 accounted for 43% of the patients.

The Home Care patients suffered from 45 different types of cancer, the commonest being lung cancer with 19 patients and a further 15 patients suffering from cancer of the breast. Head and neck cancers accounted for 24% of the cancers with forty-two patients having cancer in this area; of these cheek, tongue and oesophagus cancers were the most common. Many of the patients suffering from head and neck cancers had been chronic consumers of tobacco or alcohol during their lifetimes.

43% of the home care patients in the year 2015-16 lived in poverty with 46 of these being very poor and often requiring more than just nursing and emotional support. For many such patients the Hospice provided food rations and other basic living requirements as well as sponsoring any medical treatment that was needed. The largest group of patients may be termed lower middle class, a section of society that also gets hit very hard, struggling to pay medical expenses for their family members with cancer and often needing a lot of emotional support. 18% of the patients were financially stable but their families were tremendously grateful

to receive support in their own homes. These patients were provided with nursing and emotional, spiritual help. This group of patients' families usually bought their own medicines and provided for any medical equipment that the patients needed, often donating any leftover medical accessories or medicine to GPH after the patient had passed away.



A child cancer patient of Ganga Prem Hospice is gifted a teddy bear by the Hospice team during a home care visit.



Most of the patients served by the Ganga Prem Hospice home care service were under-privileged.

VOLUNTEERS

Throughout the year 2015-16, ten doctors served the patients. Of these ten doctors, one was a salaried GPH member of staff and nine were volunteer doctors who gave their time and expertise as a service. Among the ten doctors, five were palliative care specialists and one was an onco-psychiatrist. The others comprised of a general physician, a dentist trained in palliative care and two interns. Seven of the volunteer doctors were from countries other than India although two of these were of Indian descent and could speak Hindi.

The doctors were supported by ten nurses, three of whom were employed by the Ganga Prem Hospice while seven were volunteers. Of the seven volunteer nurses six came from abroad, three were interns and two were palliative care nurses, one specializing in pediatrics.

Six therapists volunteered at the Hospice during the year, four of them from abroad. The therapists specialized in massage, acupuncture and aromatherapy. Two volunteer dieticians from the UK also joined the Home Care team and gave invaluable advice on diet for the patients especially those with feeding tubes and other dietary difficulties.

Thirteen general volunteers made home care visits during the year, eight of them being Indian and three of these serving as social workers. Some of the volunteers accompanied a foreign medical professional for translation and some were visiting to give emotional support to the patients and their families

2015-16 has been a special year with GPH Home Care service seeing an expansion of its services through the hard work and generosity of staff, volunteers and supporters. On behalf of all the patients, GPH extends its thanks to all who have helped make the service work so well for so many.



Ganga Prem Hospice, Rishikesh

Shradha Cancer Care Trust

Website: www.gangapremhospice.org

Regd. address: 115, C-13, Sector 3, Rohini, Delhi-110085

Correspondence address: 239, Ghalib Apts., Parwana Road, Pitampura, New Delhi 110034

Email: info@gangapremhospice.org

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