Charity launches urgent appeal in response to palliative care crisis

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EMMS International is calling for urgent action to support thousands of people who are facing their final days in isolation and without pain relief or professional care.

Following the recent Channel 4 report into a lack of palliative care in Malawi, Scotland's oldest international healthcare charity has received calls in support for its urgent appeal. The non-profit has worked at Queen Elizabeth Central Hospital, which was featured in the report, and is campaigning for pain relief and health care to be provided to rural areas.

CEO and Director of International Programmes, Cathy Ratcliff, says: **"By 2030, a 70% increase in annual cancer cases and deaths is predicted in Africa, and many of those patients will not receive professional healthcare or pain relief unless we act now."**

EMMS International is also highlighting the plight of patients in Nepal, who are living with non-communicable, life-limiting diseases, which are predicted to be the leading cause of deaths by 2040.

Sunita is a three-year, government funded UK Aid Match project between EMMS International and International Nepal Fellowship, providing palliative care in hard-to-reach locations in Nepal. Since April 2022, 1,048 individuals have been trained to address unmet palliative care needs in their communities. A vital system of morphine supply to remote villages has also been established.

Rima is 17 and her mother is living with multi-system atrophy, a rare, incurable, degenerative condition. Rima's mum went from being an independent woman, teacher and supportive parent, to being bedridden and fearful for the future.

"Before you helped me, all our family savings had been spent on my treatment," she says. "My condition has hampered my children's future, and my relatives suggested that my husband should re-marry."

EMMS International has been able to bring Rima's mother under the care of the palliative care team at Green Pasture's Hospital. But there is still so much more that must be done: Without intervention, more than a third of the population in Nepal could face their final days without medical attention or pain relief.

The situation for patients is also grave across the border, with a vital palliative care service in India facing imminent closure. Crucial drugs like Morphine are not yet freely available at District Hospitals in North India. Additionally, the service is in crisis due to a cut in funding by an external funder. EMMS International has received a desperate plea from the palliative care team to help them to meet an annual shortfall of £80,000.

Dr. Ashita Singh, Lead Doctor, says: **"The communities served are very marginalised and impoverished. The service is being rendered in response to a huge unmet, under-recognised need to affirm human dignity. Our greatest achievement is that our doors are still open to the poor and our wards are full of these precious people."**

The suffering experienced by patients and their families due to a lack of end-of-life care in Nepal, Malawi and India is unthinkable. A fast response is imperative to support them to live with dignity and to make every day matter.

Those who wish to learn more and to contribute to the appeal should visit emms.org/care

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