

PLENARIES

PLENARY 4: Transforming Palliative Care: Strategies for Compassionate and Effective Support

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Palliative care aims to optimise quality of life for individuals living with serious or life-limiting conditions through comprehensive management of physical, functional, psychological, social, and emotional needs. Within this multidisciplinary model, physiotherapy contributes to mobility maintenance, symptom management, preservation of functional ability, prevention of complications, and support for independence and comfort. Transforming palliative rehabilitation requires a shift from disease-centred care towards holistic, person-centred approaches that respect individual goals, preferences, dignity, and quality of life.

Effective palliative rehabilitation requires ongoing assessment of changing functional needs and appropriate adaptation of interventions according to prognosis, clinical status, symptom burden, tolerance, and patient priorities. Physiotherapeutic strategies may include mobility and transfer training, positioning, therapeutic exercise, respiratory interventions, energy conservation, symptom-relieving techniques, and modification of meaningful daily activities. Intervention intensity and goals should remain responsive to the individual's changing condition rather than being driven solely by conventional rehabilitation outcomes.

Compassionate communication with patients, families, caregivers, and multidisciplinary team members is fundamental to establishing realistic goals and ensuring continuity of care. Clinical decision-making requires careful balance between therapeutic benefit and comfort, safety, dignity, and patient choice.

Palliative rehabilitation extends beyond restoring or maintaining physical function. Its ultimate purpose is to enable individuals to participate in meaningful activities, maintain valued relationships, preserve autonomy, and experience comfort and dignity throughout the course of illness. Integrating physiotherapy within holistic palliative care can therefore contribute to more responsive, compassionate, and person-centred support across the continuum of care.