

CONNAUGHT HOSPITAL PALLIATIVE CARE UNIT
ANNUAL REPORT TO THE CHARITY
Period: 1st January 2025 – 12th December 2025

1. Executive Summary

We are pleased to present the annual report of the Connaught Hospital Palliative Care Unit, outlining the key activities, achievements, and challenges for the reporting period. With your continued and generous support, the unit has further strengthened its capacity to deliver holistic, compassionate, and patient-centered care to individuals with life-limiting illnesses, significantly improving the quality of life for patients and their families.

2. Manpower

The unit is led by Consultant Family Physician, Dr. Melvina Thompson, supported by four dedicated nurses under the supervision of Senior Nursing Officer, Patience Sankoh.

Key staffing updates:

- Dr. Mary Bunn, unit pioneer, relocated to the UK in May 2025.
- Dr. Greg Foray volunteered from June to July 2025 before proceeding to Ghana for further studies.
- Pharmacist Ishmael Ivan Jalloh continues to support the unit intermittently, especially in opioid requisition and morphine preparation.

3. Overview of Services Provided

- New patients seen: 177 (excluding the patients at Ola During)
- Cumulative total since inception: 1,323 patients
- No. of patients visited during Home visits: 36
- Common conditions managed: Breast cancer, liver cancer, lymphoblastoma

4. Capacity Building & Training

- Health Worker Training:

With SHST funding, palliative care training was delivered at three facilities:

- a. 34 Military Hospital: 16 participants
- b. Ola During Children's Hospital: 23 participants
- c. Princess Christian Maternity Hospital: 19 participants

Total trained: 58 health workers

- Academic Engagements:

- Palliative care continues to be integrated into the curriculum for fifth and final-year medical students at COMAHS.
- Nurse Patience Sankoh completed her Master of Public Health at Njala University in December 2025.
- Other team members are actively pursuing academic qualifications while contributing to unit operations.

- Mentorship:

Ongoing mentorship and support are provided to palliative care teams at **Ola During Children's Hospital** and **Bo Government Hospital**.

- Research and Conferences:

Three (two posters and one oral) presentations were accepted at the APCA Conference in Botswana (September 2025). Due to limited funding, only Dr. Mary Bunn was able to attend.

5. Morphine Production and Supply

During the reporting period, three batches of oral morphine (200mls) were compounded, totaling:

- 216 bottles – February 2025
- 297 bottles – May 2025 (100 bottles supplied to Ola During Children's Hospital)
- 287 bottles – September 2025

Despite these efforts, the unit continues to face inconsistent supply of morphine tablets from the Free Health Care section of the National Medical Supply Agency, which poses a significant barrier to effective pain management.

6. Partnerships & Advocacy

We have maintained strong collaborations with key stakeholders including the Ministry of Health, Connaught Hospital, Mercy Ship, Thinking Pink Foundation, Well-Woman Clinic, and Cancer UK, among others. These partnerships aim to mainstream palliative care into primary health services and enhance awareness of the specialty across the country.

In celebration of World Hospice and Palliative Care Day 2025, the unit provided 'care packages' to cancer patients admitted at Connaught Hospital. Advocacy efforts included media engagements:

- Truth Radio – Pharmacist Ishmael Ivan Jalloh
- Unity Broadcasting Online TV – Dr. Melvina Thompson

These platforms helped raise public awareness and understanding of palliative care services.

7. Utilization of Sponsor Support

With your generous contributions, the unit was able to:

- Procure essential medications including analgesics and antibiotics
- Provide transport for home visits and follow-up calls to patients
- Print patient record charts and educational materials
- Offer financial support to patients in need

These interventions directly impacted the well-being of patients and enhanced the quality of care delivered.

8. Key Challenges

Despite our achievements, the unit continues to face significant challenges:

- Inconsistent supply of essential medications, particularly morphine

- Staff shortages and increasing risk of burnout
- Limited physical space for patient consultations and care
- Low public awareness about the availability and role of palliative care

9. Future Plans (2026 and Beyond)

Looking ahead, our strategic priorities include:

- Developing a Sierra Leone–specific Palliative Care Training Manual
- Formation of the Palliative Care association of Sierra Leone
- Expanding palliative care services to other hospitals and regions
- Completing and publishing research on palliative care outcomes
- Introducing palliative care modules for nursing student training
- Securing sustainable funding to improve medication access and staff welfare

10. Acknowledgements

We are sincerely grateful for your unwavering support throughout the year. Your contributions have been instrumental in delivering compassionate care and alleviating suffering for patients and their families. Together, we continue to uphold the values of dignity, comfort, and hope in the face of serious illness.

Warm regards,
Dr. Melvina C. Thompson
Palliative Care Unit
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