

POPULATION-LEVEL ACCESS TO PALLIATIVE CARE SERVICES IN INDIA: STATE-WISE ANALYSIS OF 526 FACILITIES

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Introduction: Globally, 56.8 million people require palliative care each year of which 7.2 million reside in India. We aimed to understand population-level access to palliative care centres and services across 36 Indian states.

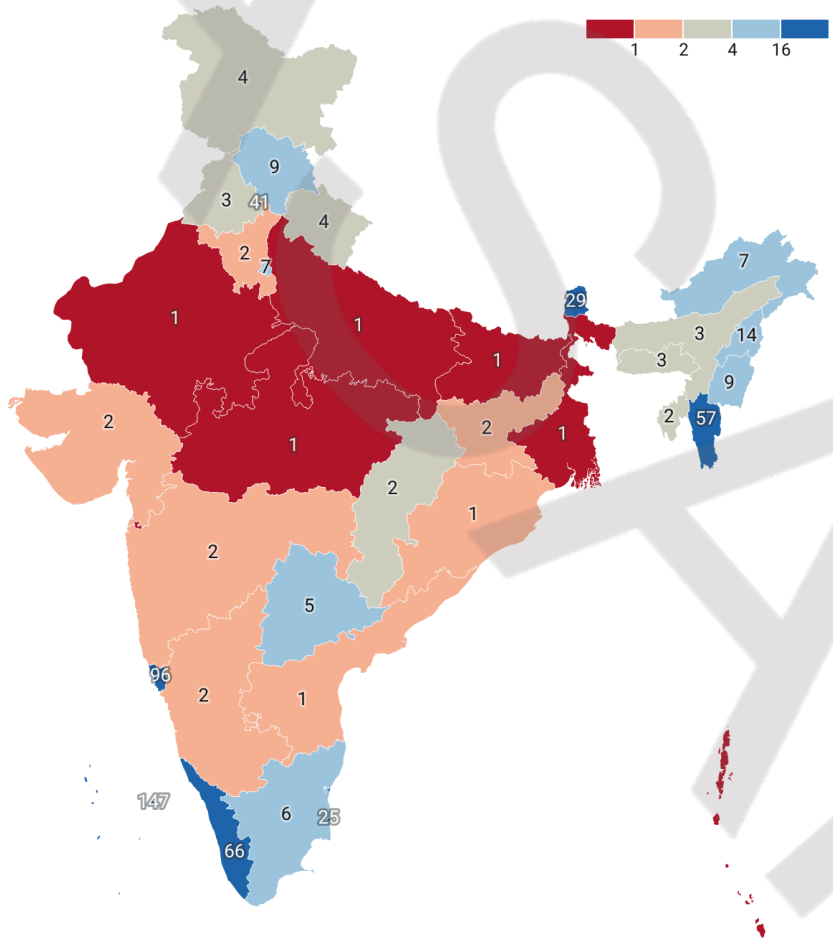
Methods: Data on palliative care centres were retrieved from the directory compiled by Pallium India which is maintained by regional managers by identifying centres through a network of healthcare workers. It includes information on available services, administrative strength, and the availability of opioids. State-wise 2022 projected population was taken from the National Population Commission 2019 report. Accessibility was defined by the number of centres per 10 million people.

Results: As of November 2022, India had 847 palliative care centres, of which 526 (62.1%) were active. Nationally, there were nearly 4 centres per 10 million population. Lakshadweep had the highest accessibility with 147 centres while the union territories of Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Daman and Diu had no palliative care centres (Figure). State comparisons of access to specific palliative services are presented in the Table. Out-patient, in-patient, and home care were provided in 410 (77.9%), 324 (61.6%), and 381 (72.4%) centres, respectively. Of the 504 centres with relevant data, morphine was present in 333 (66.1%). At least one trained healthcare worker was present in 477 centres. Services were free at 371 (73%) out of 508 centres with 19 centres providing free service to only those from poor socio-economic backgrounds.

Conclusion: Palliative care accessibility varies widely across states with no care in some union territories. Policies need to create standards for minimum number of centres, number of trained healthcare workers, and the availability of morphine, for the states to follow. The current analysis did not consider the time taken to reach these centres, which is an important criterion for assessing accessibility.

Figure: Accessibility to palliative care centres in India
 (link to edit - https://www.datawrapper.de/_/QvEIZ/)

Palliative Care Centres per 10 Million Population Per State in India (2022)



Created with Datawrapper

Table: Accessibility to palliative care services in India in states with palliative care centres.

Palliative care service	State with best accessibility	State with worst accessibility
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In-patient care	Mizoram 49 centres per 10 million population	Meghalaya, Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu, Meghalaya and Lakshadweep - Service not available
Out-patient care	Lakshadweep 147 centres per 10 million population	Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu - Service not available
Home care	Lakshadweep 147 centres per 10 million population	Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu, Odisha, Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim - Service not available
Morphine availability	Lakshadweep 147 centres per 10 million population	Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu - Service not available



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Introduction

Globally, 56.8 million people require palliative care each year of which 7.2 million reside in India.¹ However, palliative care is accessible to only 1% of them.²

While cross-sectional assessments have investigated the status of palliative care services at specific centers in certain regions, knowledge on the assessment of accessibility to these services across the country is limited. We aimed to understand population-level access to palliative care centers and services across 36 Indian states.

Methods

Data on palliative care centers were retrieved from the directory compiled by Pallium India, a leading palliative care non-profit organization in India.

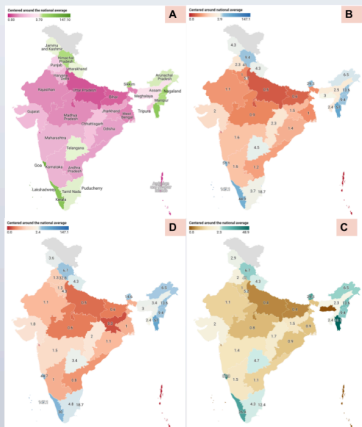
The directory is maintained by regional managers by identifying centers through a network of healthcare workers. It includes information on available services, administrative strength, and the availability of opioids. The directory was accessed last in November 2022 for this analysis.

State-wise 2022 projected population was taken from the National Population Commission 2019 report. Accessibility was defined by the number of centers per 10 million people.

Results

Table 1: Palliative care services in India

Variable	N (% of active centers)
Total active centers	526 (62.1% of total centers)
Type of care - Out-Patient/In-Patient care/Home-based care	410 (78%) / 324 (62%) / 381 (72%)
Centers with morphine (n=504)	333 (66%)
Cost of service (n=508) - Free/Chargeable/Both	371 (73%) / 118 (23%) / 19 (4%)
Centers with healthcare workers trained in palliative care (n=495)	470 (95%)



Maps A-D: Population-level access to palliative care services in India

A: Palliative care centers per 10 million population.

B: Palliative care centers with out-patient services per 10 million population

C: Palliative care centers with in-patient services per 10 million population

D: Palliative care centers with morphine per 10 million population

Table 2: States/UTs without Palliative care services.

Palliative care service	State without services
In-patient care	Meghalaya, Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu, and Lakshadweep (4)
Out-patient care	Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu (2)
Home care	Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu, Odisha, Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim (5)
Morphine availability	Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu (2)

Discussion

Palliative care accessibility varies widely across states with no care in some union territories. Policies need to create standards for minimum number of centers, number of trained healthcare workers, and the availability of morphine, for the states to follow. The current analysis did not consider the time taken to reach these centers, which is an important criterion for assessing accessibility.

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