



# FIRST COURSE OF PALLIATIVE CARE IN UNDERGRADUATE AT A PERUVIAN UNIVERSITY

PRIMER CURSO DE CUIDADOS PALIATIVOS EN PREGRADO DE MEDICINA EN UNA UNIVERSIDAD PERUANA

José Portugal-Sánchez <sup>1,2,a</sup>, Rolando Vásquez-Alva <sup>1,2,b,e</sup>, Carolina Pérez-Agüero <sup>1,3,c</sup>, Rita Abarca-Del Carpio <sup>4,c,f</sup>  
Katia Echegaray-Castro <sup>1,5,c,g</sup>, Virginia Garaycochea-Cannon <sup>1,6,c,h</sup>, José Amado-Tineo <sup>1,2,b,e</sup>

## Mr. Editor:

The epidemiological transition that the world is experiencing requires health personnel prepared to respond to the needs and demands of the population; This also applies to low-income and medium-income countries, where oncological and non-oncological diseases are diagnosed in advanced stages and represent a high burden for the patient and family, often associated with pain and suffering <sup>(1,2)</sup>.

Palliative care (PC) aims to alleviate suffering, constitutes a fundamental human right and must be provided with the best possible quality <sup>(1)</sup>. The physician's competencies must be adapted to the needs of the population; however, in Latin America, there are few specific training programs on palliative care, and they are even more scarce or absent in undergraduate programs <sup>(3)</sup>. For more than a decade, measures have been proposed to improve this; In countries such as Brazil, Argentina, Costa Rica, Colombia, and Chile, meetings on education and PC have been held where experts recommend starting from undergraduate university studies to acquire basic communication skills, apply bioethical principles, learn PC principles, comprehensively understand the patient and his family, and recognize the importance of teamwork <sup>(4)</sup>.

In 2020, the Latin American Atlas of PC reported that only 15% of medical schools in the region had an independent subject on PC <sup>(5)</sup>. In 2021, the knowledge about it among Peruvian medical students was reported as low or intermediate <sup>(6)</sup>; nevertheless, there are reports of educational experiences with clear benefits in other parts of the world <sup>(7,8)</sup>. Although it is actual PC are taught as chapters, within some courses of the professional medical career, in Peru in 2019, formal postgraduate educational programs in PC began (with the first master's degree at a public university). In the first semester of 2022, At the same university, the first exclusive undergraduate course on PC was opened for students in the ninth semester of medicine, in virtual mode (in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic), with a capacity for 40 students (a quarter of the promotion) of 16 weeks duration and voluntary participation at the choice of the students.

<sup>1</sup> Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos.

<sup>2</sup> Hospital Nacional Edgardo Rebagliati Martins.

<sup>3</sup> Hospital Centro Médico Naval

<sup>4</sup> Parc Sanitari Sant Joan de Deu. Sant Boi, Catalunya, España.

<sup>5</sup> Hospital Central de la Fuerza Aérea del Perú.

<sup>6</sup> Instituto Nacional de Salud del Niño.

<sup>a</sup> Médico intensivista.

<sup>b</sup> Médico internista.

<sup>c</sup> Médico geriatra.

<sup>d</sup> Médico Pediatra.

<sup>e</sup> PHD en medicina.

<sup>f</sup> Mg en Psicogeriatría.

<sup>g</sup> Mg en Cuidados Paliativos,

<sup>h</sup> Mg en Bioética.

Citar como: Portugal-Sánchez J, Vásquez-Alva R, Pérez-Agüero C, Abarca-Del Carpio R, Echegaray-Castro K, Garaycochea-Cannon V, Amado-Tineo J. Primer curso de cuidados paliativos en pregrado de medicina en una universidad peruana. Rev Fac Med Hum. 2023;23(3):179-180. doi 10.25176/RFMH.v23i3.5548

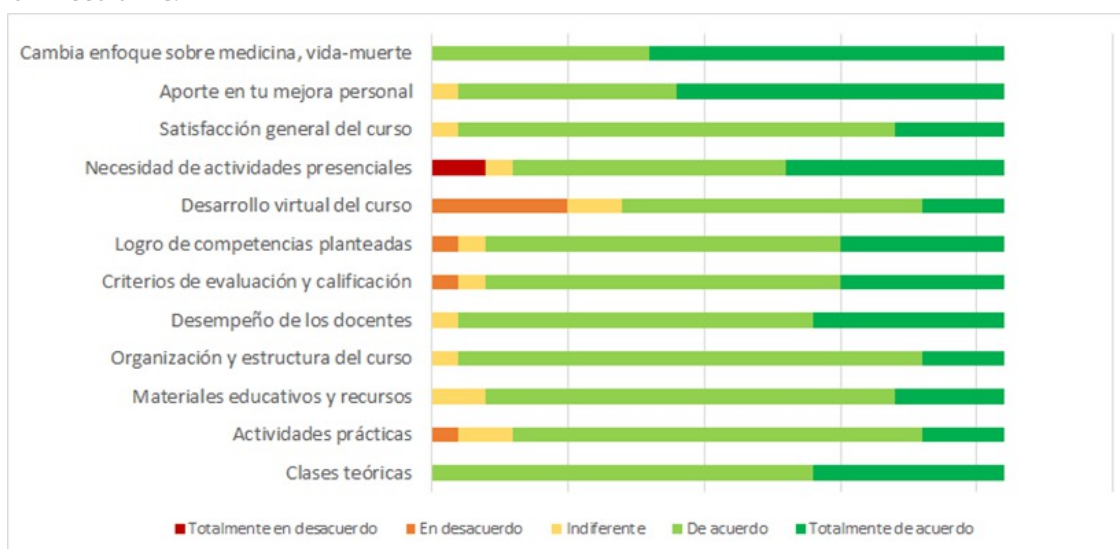
Journal home page: <http://revistas.urp.edu.pe/index.php/RFMH>

Article published by the Magazine of the Faculty of Human Medicine of the Ricardo Palma University. It is an open access article, distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons License: Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International, CC BY 4.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), that allows non-commercial use, distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided that the original work is duly cited. For commercial use, please contact revista.medicina@urp.edu.pe



The students mentioned that the main reason for choosing the course was facing advanced illnesses, in the family environment, with suffering and the need for palliative care, which was often not recognized as such. 95% of the students expressed a satisfactory opinion with the development of the course (figure 1) and showed interest in the subject, active participation, and achieved good grades; highlighted the humanistic, biopsychosocial and spiritual approach, as well as addressing issues that are not covered in other courses: the approach to the end of life and coping with death, as well as communication strategies and interaction with the family of the patient in need of PC.

All students mentioned that they would recommend the course to their peers, and 93% believe that it should be required for all medical students. Among the aspects to be improved, they mentioned the need for face-to-face activities and the opportunity to learn about real clinical cases. We consider this an excellent step for medical training in the country, where the PC culture is in the development phase, and it will be expanded to all students of medicine and health sciences, which will contribute to improving the quality of life of the patient and that of his family; Likewise, the humanization of medicine will be favored, which is the great society demand<sup>(9,10)</sup>.



**Figure 1.** Grade of satisfaction with the first palliative care course in undergraduate medicine at a Peruvian public university. Survey conducted at the end of the course, response rate 78%, average age 23 years (20-28), female 48%

**Authorship Contributions:** All authors participated in the conception, preparation, and approval of the final version of the manuscript.

**Financing:** Self-financed.

**Conflicts of interest:** No conflicts of interest are declared.

**Received:** February 22, 2023

**Approved:** June 17, 2023

**Correspondence:** José Amado-Tineo.

**Address:** Jr Belisario Flores 238 Dpto 301 Lince, Lima, Perú.

**Telephone number:** 990452547

**E-mail:** [jamadot@unmsm.edu.pe](mailto:jamadot@unmsm.edu.pe) ; [jamadot@gmail.com](mailto:jamadot@gmail.com)

## REFERENCES

- Pastrana T, De Lima L. Palliative Care in Latin America: Are We Making Any Progress? Assessing Development Over Time Using Macro Indicators. *J Pain Symptom Manage.* 2022 Jan;63(1):33-41. doi: [10.1016/j.jpainsymman.2021.07.020](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpainsymman.2021.07.020). Epub 2021 Aug 12. PMID: 34391843.
- Runzer-Colmenares FM, Parodi JF, Perez-Agüero C, Echegaray K, Samamé JC. Las personas con enfermedad terminal y la necesidad de cuidados paliativos: una deuda pendiente de los servicios de salud. *Acta Med Peru.* 2019;36(2):134-44
- Vindrola-Padros C, Mertnoff R, Lasmarias C, Gómez-Batiste, X. Palliative care education in Latin America: A systematic review of training programs for healthcare professionals. *Palliative and Supportive Care* 2018; 16(1):107-117. doi: [10.1017/S147895151700061X](https://doi.org/10.1017/S147895151700061X)
- Wenka R, De Lima L, Mutto E, Berenguel MR, Centeno C. Encuentro sobre educación de cuidado paliativo en Latinoamérica. Recomendaciones sobre enseñanza en el pregrado y en el primer nivel de atención de salud. *Med Paliat* 2016; 23(1):42-48. doi: [10.1016/j.medipa.2013.11.002](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.medipa.2013.11.002)
- Pastrana T, De Lima L, Sánchez-Cárdenas M, Van Steijn D, Garralda E, Pons JJ, et al (2021). *Atlas de Cuidados Paliativos en Latinoamérica 2020 (2ª ed.)*. Houston: IAHPCC Press.
- Tarazona-Pedrerós D, Espinoza-Rojas R. Factores asociados al nivel de conocimiento sobre cuidados paliativos en estudiantes de medicina de una Universidad en Lima, Perú. *Rev. Fac. Med. Hum.* Julio 2021; 21(3):571-579. DOI [10.25176/RFMH.v21i3.3768](https://doi.org/10.25176/RFMH.v21i3.3768)
- Boland JW, Brown MEL, Duenas A, et al. How effective is undergraduate palliative care teaching for medical students? A systematic literature review. *BMJ Open* 2020;10:e036458. doi: [10.1136/bmjopen-2019-036458](https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2019-036458)
- Pieters, J., Dolmans, D.H.J.M., Versteegen, D.M.L. et al. Palliative care education in the undergraduate medical curricula: students' views on the importance of, their confidence in, and knowledge of palliative care. *BMC Palliat Care* 18, 72 (2019). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12904-019-0458-x>
- Allende-Pérez S, Alanis-Cho a, Delgado-Fernández A, Peña-Nieves A, Verástegui-Avilés E. Conocimientos básicos y percepciones en cuidados paliativos en médicos de pregrado de la Universidad Autónoma de México: un estudio transversal. *Med Paliat.* 2020;27(2):71-78
- Amado-Tineo J, Echegaray-Castro K, Garaycochea-Cannon V, Limaymanta C. Revistas científicas sobre cuidados paliativos y terapia del dolor en Latinoamérica. *Med Paliat* 2022; 29(2):133-138. doi: [10.20986/medpa.2022.1300/2021](https://doi.org/10.20986/medpa.2022.1300/2021).