



Press Release by Palliative Care Association of Uganda (PCAU) World Day of the Sick 2025.

On February 11, 2025, PCAU joins the Catholic faith and all other compassionate people globally to offer prayers and observance to those who are suffering from illness and other health challenges.

This year's theme for the day of the sick is "**Hope does not disappoint**" (Rm 5:5) **but strengthens us in times of trial**. We pray that all who suffer sickness find comfort and hope from these words of faith. Sickness brings us emotional, physical, and social distress. And many who suffer face financial constraints and other hardships. We cannot rely only on our strength and of those around us, we need God's grace and providence in times of sickness. For professional teams like us who offer treatment and care this theme calls upon us to provide holistic and patient-centered care that upholds dignity, comfort, and respect bringing hope to all in our care.

The vision of PCAU is **Palliative Care for ALL in Uganda**. Palliative care is the active holistic care of individuals across all ages with serious health-related suffering due to severe illnesses, especially those near the end of life. Most adults in need of palliative care globally have chronic diseases such as cardiovascular diseases, cancer, chronic respiratory diseases, AIDS, and diabetes. Many other conditions may require palliative care, including kidney failure, chronic liver disease, multiple sclerosis, Parkinson's disease, rheumatoid arthritis, neurological disease, dementia, congenital anomalies, and drug-resistant tuberculosis.

In Uganda, at least 500,000 people need palliative care. International mappings put Uganda at the advanced level of palliative care services in Africa. There are about 300 health facilities in 107 of 146 districts with a form of palliative care. Patients who require oral liquid morphine medicine for pain control as prescribed by qualified health workers also receive it free of charge at accredited health facilities. Palliative care is provided in health facilities, designated outreach centers, and homes. However, home care is still limited to private health facilities, which greatly affects the level of access since most patients who need palliative care, especially at the end of life, are in their homes.

As we mark the World Day of the Sick this year, we face the unprecedented US government freeze on funding for many health initiatives. We know that many patients and their families who are dependent on Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and donor agencies for their counseling, medical refills, and survival are terrified and worried now. There exists confusion at the community level about how the US-funded life-saving disease prevention and treatment programs will continue. We appeal to the government and all stakeholders to come out with assurances and provide practical responses to bridge the anticipated crises. To ensure sustainability, palliative care should be fully integrated into the public healthcare system.

At the community level, we can all show compassion to those who suffer. Pope Francis in his message for the 33rd World Day of the Sick calls for our renewed commitment to caring for the sick with love, compassion, and faith. PCAU extends gratitude to healthcare workers, caregivers, volunteers, and all those who dedicate their lives to ease the suffering of others.

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The Palliative Care Association of Uganda (PCAU) is the National Association for Palliative Care Providers and well-wishers in Uganda. PCAU was established in 1999 as a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) to support and promote the development of palliative care in Uganda. In 2024, PCAU commemorated 25 years of compassion, holistic care, pain relief, hope, and justice for families and communities. PCAU is composed of 30 Organizations and over 1600 individual Members.

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