CONGRESS THEME · BRIDGING CARE: FROM RESEARCH TO CLINICAL PRACTICE

Building an Integrated Pediatric Palliative Care Service at a Teaching Hospital: A 5-Year Journey

Krithika S Rao*, Vasudeva Bhat K, Archana MV, Swathi PM, Emine Rahiman, Anuja Damani, Shreya Nair, Naveen Salins

Kasturba Medical College, Manipal Academy of Higher Education, Manipal, India

AS-ICPPC-2026-00256

7TH MARUZZA INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS ON PAEDIATRIC PALLIATIVE CARE

MANIPAL ACADEMY of HIGHER EDUCATION
(Deemed to be University under Section 3 of the UGC Act, 1956)

KASTURBA MEDICAL COLLEGE MANIPAL
(A constituent unit of MAHE, Manipal)

Disclosures:

- No Financial conflicts

- Use of Claude.ai to help with slide designs

Children in LMICs face unmet palliative care needs

Delayed referrals

Children reach palliative care late

Limited specialist services

Few teams, especially outside major cities

Inadequate symptom management

Distressing symptoms go under-treated

Fragmented psychosocial support

Family support is piecemeal

OUR AIM

Describe how an integrated PPC model grew inside a tertiary university hospital, and its impact on service use and capacity building.

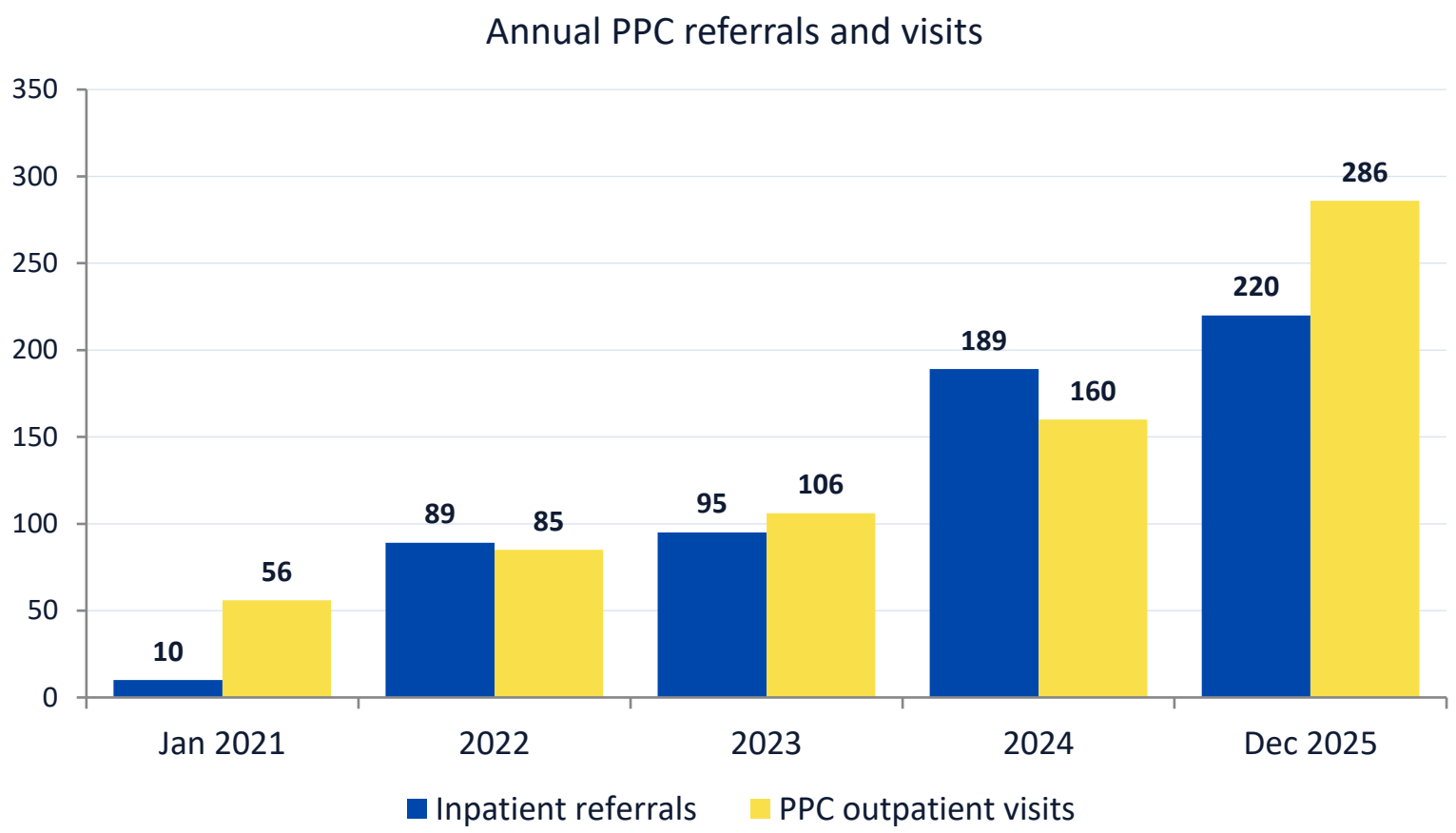
In India, PPC remains limited outside major cities.

Staged development of an embedded PPC service

01 Needs assessment on the ward	2019	Solo consultant on 25% protected time, physically present at pediatric oncology rounds twice a week to learn the patient mix and their issues
02 Trigger-based consultation-liaison	2019–20	Teams learned to spot PPC needs early and which triggers should prompt referral; referrals grew gradually
03 Virtual pivot during COVID	2020	Online capacity building on triggers, symptoms and goals of care; twice-weekly paper rounds; online family meetings
04 Trust-led expansion	Post-COVID	Inpatient and outpatient referrals from diagnosis; extended to post-HSCT, hemophilia and sickle cell disease
05 Embedded model	Today	Joint grant to test feasibility and scope; PPC now works seamlessly within the pediatric oncology team

Setting: tertiary university hospital, India · Data: inpatient referrals and outpatient visits, Jan 2021 – Dec 2025

Service use rose steadily, 2021–2025



22×

Inpatient referrals

10 (Jan 2021) → 220 (Dec 2025)

5×

PPC outpatient visits

56 (Jan 2021) → 286 (Dec 2025)

Jan 2021 baseline and Dec 2025 end point per abstract; 2022–2024 annual counts

A solo consultant became a team of four

Where we began

Solo PPC consultant

25% protected time, 2019

via a grant

- **Physician**
- **Nurse**
- **Psychologist**
- **Academic and research support**

Embedded care in practice: one team, shared decisions

PPC nurse within the pediatric oncology team

- Enrolls every patient in the PPC program at diagnosis
- Keeps a log of hospital visits
- Coordinates symptom follow-up
- Liaises between pediatric oncology and PPC
- Educates patients and caregivers

Joint goals-of-care discussions

Led together by PPC and pediatric oncology

All high-risk cases

Every transition point in the illness trajectory

Easier transition if the child's condition worsens

Trust built with families

Research and capacity building

Education

Team capacity building;
Global leadership and training roles

Collaboration

International partnerships strengthening the program

ICMR-funded multicentre RCT

Embedded PPC in pediatric oncology, across India

HOSPITAL SETTINGS

- Public
- Private
- Trust-funded

THREE-ARM COMPARISON

- Standard oncology care
- Consultation PPC
- Embedded PPC

Now in the final phase of the trial

Embedding PPC is feasible and sustainable

What made it work

- A trusted peer relationship with the head of pediatric oncology opened the door
- Physical presence at rounds revealed needs and referral triggers
- Online sessions and paper rounds sustained the service through COVID
- Visible value-built team confidence: referrals from diagnosis, new subspecialties

CONCLUSION

Embedding PPC within pediatric subspecialty services is feasible and sustainable in a resource-constrained setting, offering a scalable framework for LMICs.

LIMITATIONS

Single centre; referral and visit counts only; RCT results awaited

The team behind the service



Together on the ward



Core team



#hatson4cpc awareness day



Colleagues and collaborators

WITH GRATITUDE TO

Department of Palliative Medicine and Supportive Care

Department of Pediatric Oncology

Kasturba Medical College, Manipal

…and the children and families who trust us with their care


Grazie
mille!