

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION  
GUIDELINES FOR CANCER-RELATED PAIN MANAGEMENT BY NURSES  
AT THE NAKURU COUNTY REFERRAL HOSPITAL

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## ABSTRACT.

More than 70% of cancer patients will experience chronic cancer-related pain at some point in the course of the disease. Nurses have a key role in cancer pain management by accurate assessment, prompt intervention, and adequate evaluation of pain relief measures for better cancer-related pain control. To enhance this, World Health Organization (WHO) developed a 3-step analgesic ladder in 1986 to guide cancer-related pain management worldwide.

The aim of this study was to evaluate implementation of the WHO guideline on cancer-related pain management by nurses at the Nakuru County Referral Hospital. The study adopted a descriptive cross-sectional study design. Nakuru County Referral Hospital was purposively selected as a case study as it is involved with care of cancer patients. The study targeted all nurses working at Nakuru County Referral Hospital; systematic random sampling was used to select the respondents where every 2<sup>nd</sup> nurse was selected. A pre-test was done at the Naivasha County Referral Hospital on 10 % ( 23) of the sample. Data was collected using a semi-structured questionnaire for nurses, and an interview schedule for nurse managers who were the key informants. Qualitative data was analyzed through thematic content analysis and presented in form of text. Quantitative data was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20, with sample weights applied prior to analysis. The results are presented through narratives, tables, pie charts and bar graphs. Ethical clearance was obtained from MKU and Nakuru County Referral Hospital Research and ethics Committees and relevant departments.

The study findings indicate that 77.4% of the respondents had low scores on knowledge, 79.8% had poor attitude and 91.2% had poor adherence to WHO guideline on cancer-related pain management, among the facility factors that influence nurses ability to implement the WHO guideline were:-continuous medical education on cancer-related pain management (23.6%); appropriate referral mechanisms to healthcare professionals with specialized skills (17.1%) and increasing opioid availability by (16.4%) of the respondents, the statistical tests showed a significant relationship knowledge and adherence to WHO guidelines(p-value=0.001) and additional formal training and adherence to the WHO guidelines on cancer-related pain management(p value= 0.000).

The study concluded that there was low implementation of the WHO guideline on cancer-related pain management by nurses and recommends additional formal training and emphasis on adherence to the WHO guideline on cancer-related pain management by nurses.

The results will inform the national and county ministries of Health in allocating funds and planning for additional formal training for nurses in form of seminars, workshops and exchange programmes to ensure optimal management of cancer-related pain.