

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.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.

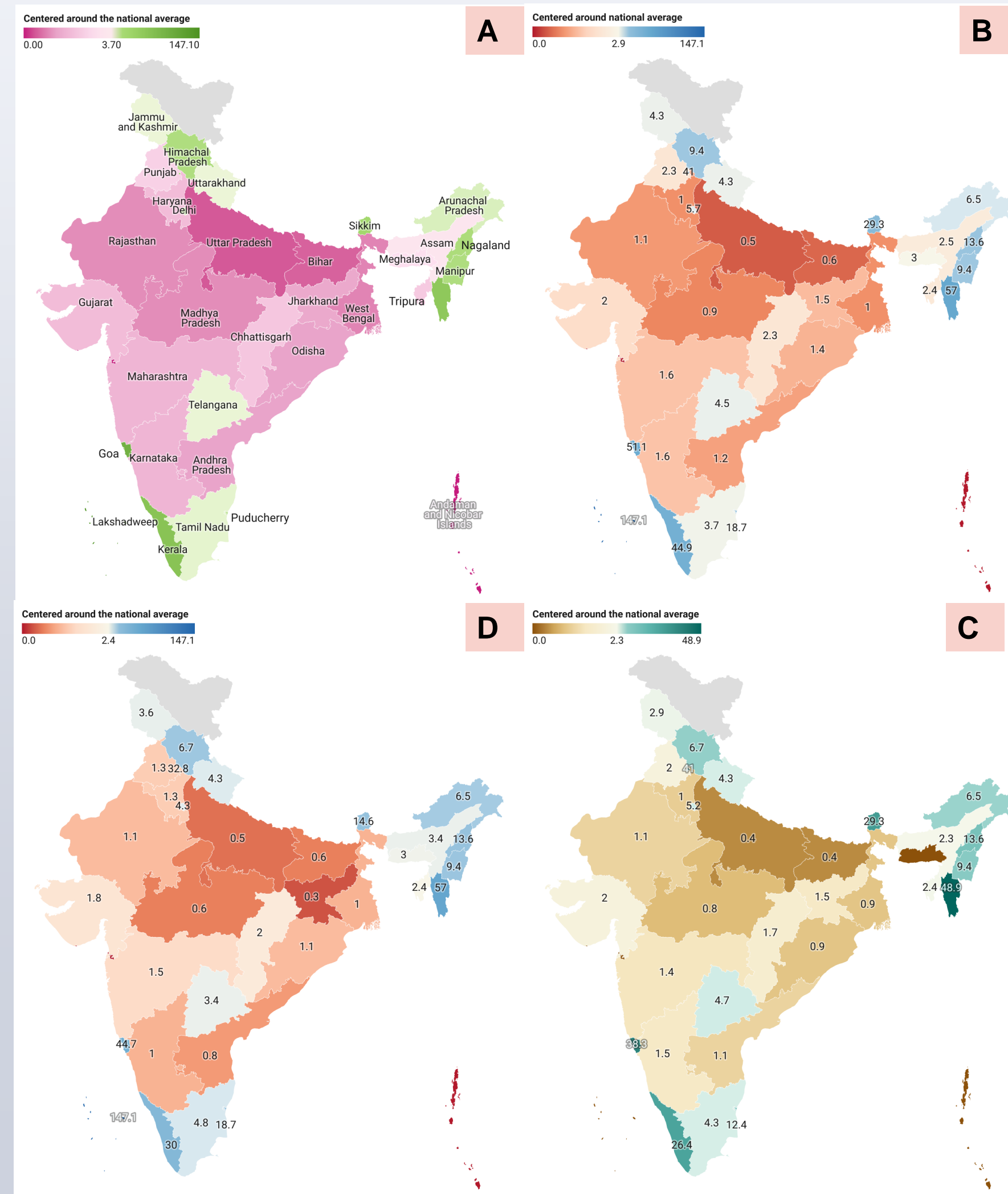
The directory is maintained by regional managers by identifying centers through a network of healthcare workers. It includes information on available services, administrative strength, and the availability of opioids. The directory was accessed last in November 2022 for this analysis.

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/Chargable/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.

References

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