



OPIS

Organisation for the
Prevention of
Intense Suffering

PRESS RELEASE

Burkina Faso takes major step forward on palliative care and access to morphine

OPIS co-organising national conference with Ministry of Health and Hospice Burkina on 2-3 December 2019 in Ouagadougou

Geneva / Ouagadougou, 2 December 2019 – The Organisation for the Prevention of Intense Suffering (OPIS), a Swiss-based think-and-do tank, is pleased to announce a national conference on palliative care and pain relief being held in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso on 2-3 December 2019, which it is co-organising with the official support and participation of the Ministry of Health and in partnership with Hospice Burkina, the country's palliative care association. The aim of the conference is to launch a national strategy to implement palliative care in the West African country, and to ensure access to morphine for the tens of thousands of patients each year with terminal cancer and other conditions causing severe physical pain. OPIS financed the conference through a crowdfunding campaign and drafted a strategy for extending access to morphine to all in need.

The vast majority of patients in severe pain can't get morphine

Most of the world's population live in countries where patients in severe pain are unable to access morphine or receive palliative care, as documented in a major 2017 [report](#) in the medical journal The Lancet, and millions each year are left in agony. This is also the situation in Burkina Faso in West Africa. Morphine itself is a relatively inexpensive medication derived from the opium poppy. However, overly strict laws and regulations based on unwarranted fears of addiction and diversion, and the lack of training of medical personnel in administering morphine, mean that it is rarely available to patients in need in low-income countries. Without morphine to relieve severe pain, adequate palliative care is not possible.

New initiative to relieve severe pain and suffering in Burkina Faso

Hospice Burkina was founded in 2017 by Dr. Martin Lankoandé, an anesthesiologist with the mission to bring relief to patients in severe pain, most of them suffering from terminal cancer. OPIS has been supporting Hospice Burkina on this mission and in the organisation of this national conference. Approximately 100 participants are expected, including stakeholders from the country's health sector and several international speakers. Among them is Dr. Anne Merriman, founder of Hospice Africa and a pioneer in making liquid oral morphine available to patients in Uganda and in many other countries in Africa. The Minister of Health of Burkina Faso, Prof. Léonie Claudine Lougue/Sorgho, will be delivering an opening speech. Jonathan Leighton, Executive Director of OPIS, will be talking about the prevention of intense suffering as a core ethical priority and the urgency of providing morphine to patients



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in need. During the second day of the conference, a workshop will be held where participants will discuss and finalise strategies to improve laws and regulations, implement training and relieve other obstacles to preparing and providing morphine to patients.

www.preventsuffering.org/burkina

About OPIS

The Organisation for the Prevention of Intense Suffering (OPIS) is a think-and-do tank designing and promoting blueprints for a compassionate society grounded in deep ethical thinking. Our vision is a world that eliminates the preventable suffering of all sentient beings. Our mission is two-fold:

1. Advocate for solutions to specific causes of intense suffering
2. Promote a compassionate ethical foundation for global decision-making where the prevention of intense suffering is given the highest priority

Specific cause areas we are currently focusing on include:

- Access to effective medicines to relieve severe physical pain in humans, including
 - [Morphine](#) for terminal cancer and other serious conditions, especially in lower-income countries where it is largely inaccessible
 - Effective treatments for excruciating [cluster headaches](#) that are difficult to access due to strict legal regulations
- Ending the horrors of factory farming and other forms of torture of non-human animals

OPIS was founded in 2016 as a Swiss non-profit association and is headquartered in Geneva. Follow us on [Facebook](#) and on [Twitter](#).

www.preventsuffering.org

For more information

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