

EFFECT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON THE UTILIZATION OF HOSPICE-PALLIATIVE CARE SERVICES IN HUNGARY

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OBJECTIVES

Hospice-palliative care focuses on improving the quality of end-of-life care and respecting patient's preferences regarding end-of-life care and treatment. The effect of coronavirus disease 2019 and 2020 on the utilization of hospice-palliative services (home care and inpatient care) are unknown in Hungary. The goals to investigate the utilization of hospice-palliative care services before and during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2019 and 2020.

METHODS

Every year, the Hungarian Hospice-Palliative Association (MHPE) and the National Health Insurance Fund Management (NEAK) present a national picture of the operation of hospice services. We request the following objective data from the NEAK and from the hospice services: Number of cases/ patients treated, number of institutional hospice days, average care day, average institutional cost per day, bed occupancy rate, average cost of institutional care per case, cancer proportion of patients, number of patients who died in a hospice, BNO code of the most common diagnoses. Regarding home hospice care, day of care, mortality rate at home, distribution of occupational activities, proportion of cancer patients, number of employees employed, BNO code of the most common diagnoses. We compare the 2 years of the pandemic (2019 and 2020).

RESULTS

The mortality rate for patients receiving hospice care decreased by 14% ($p=0.68$) between 2019 and 2020. This assumes that palliative patients did not die in specific hospice care, despite an increase of nearly 7% ($p=0.029$) in the number of patients receiving hospice care. However, bed occupancy in hospital hospice wards decreased significantly from 83.6% before the epidemic to 71.2% ($p=0.036$) during the epidemic.

CONCLUSIONS

This study suggests that hospice home care services were maintained during the COVID-19 pandemic, while the utilization of hospice inpatient care services reduced. Home care for hospice patients is an essential component of palliative care during a pandemic.

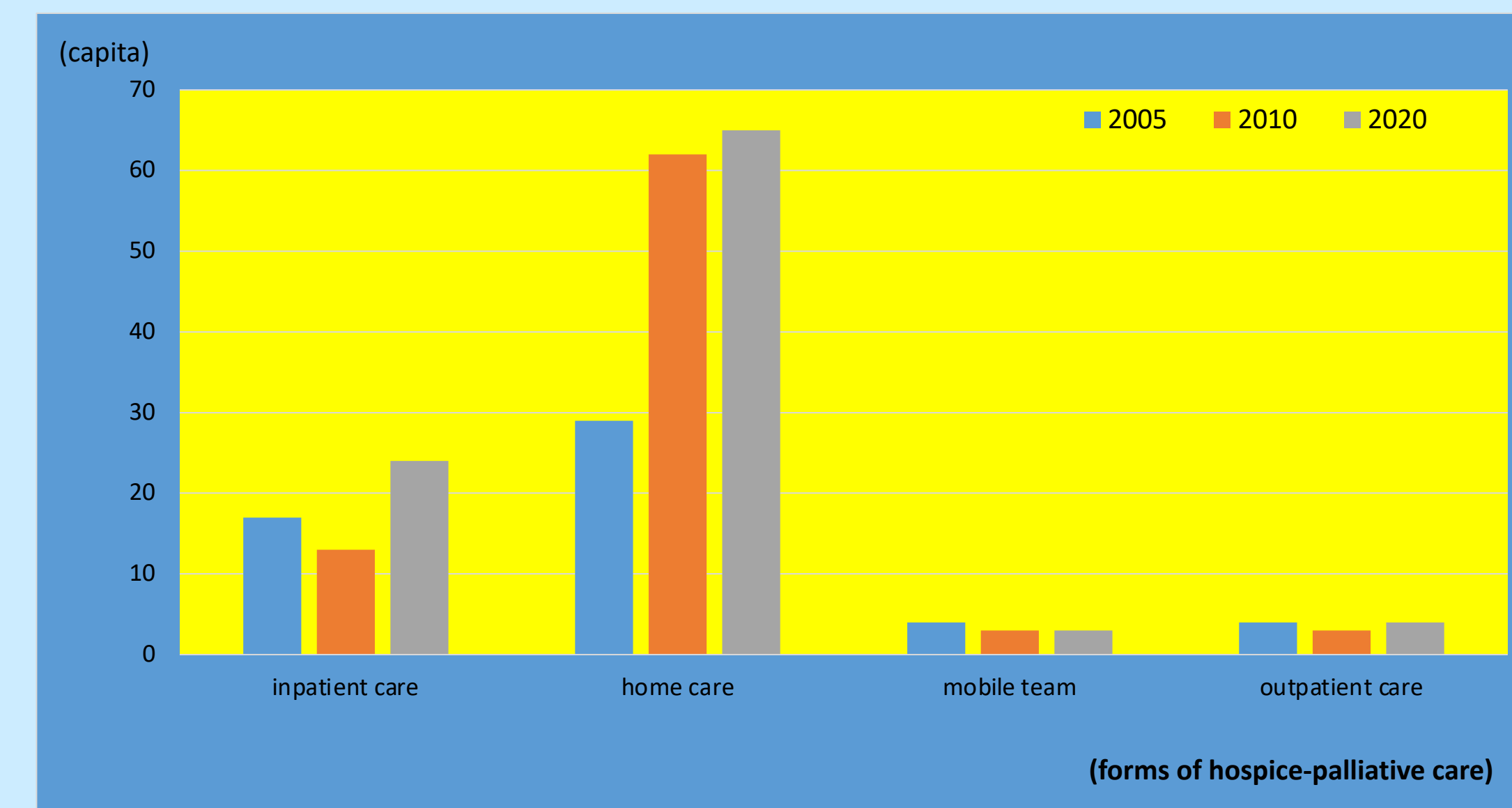


Figure 1.:
Number of hospice providers in Hungary by type of care, 2005-2020

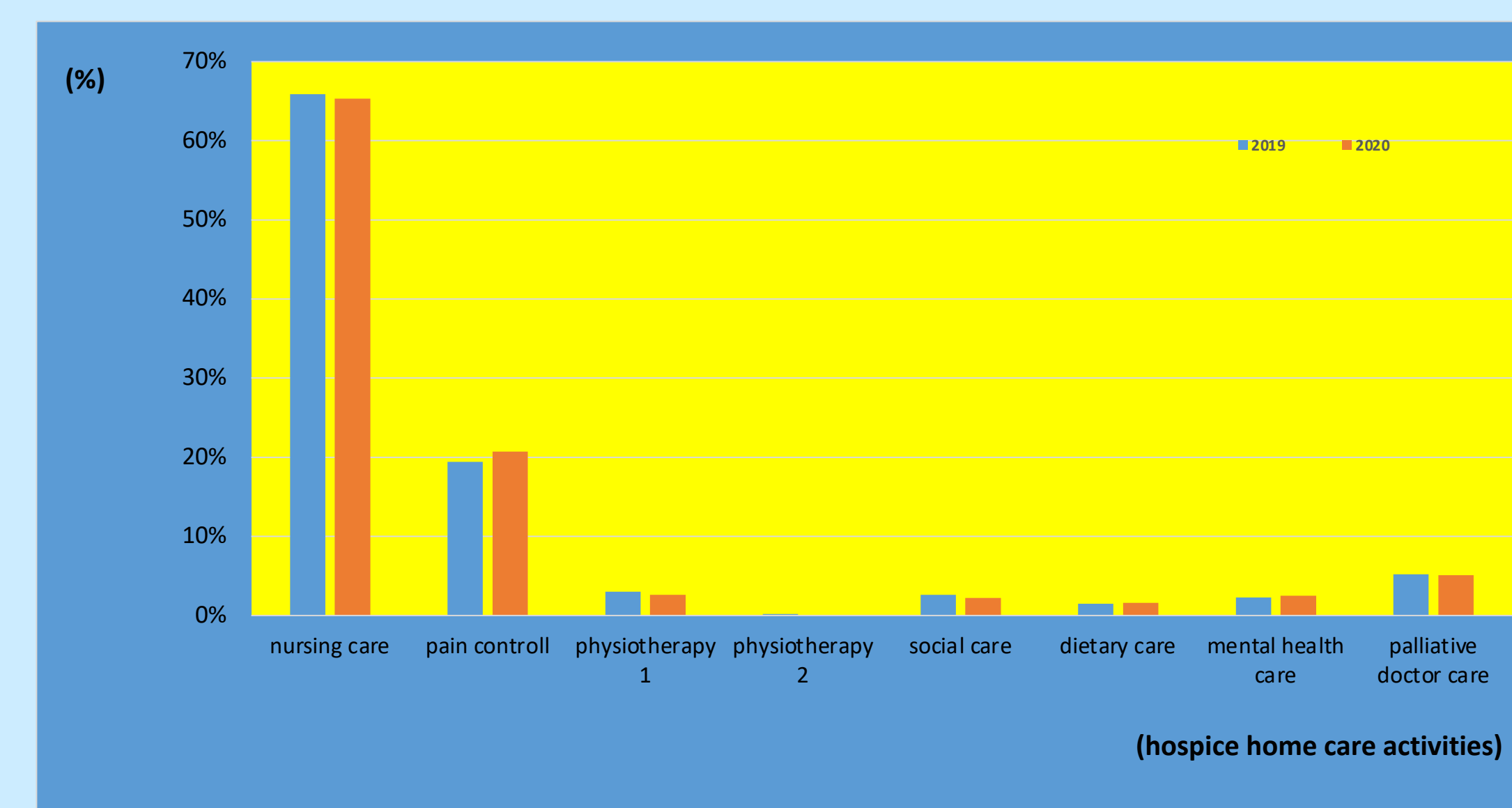


Figure 3.: Percentage distribution of home hospice activity, 2019-2020

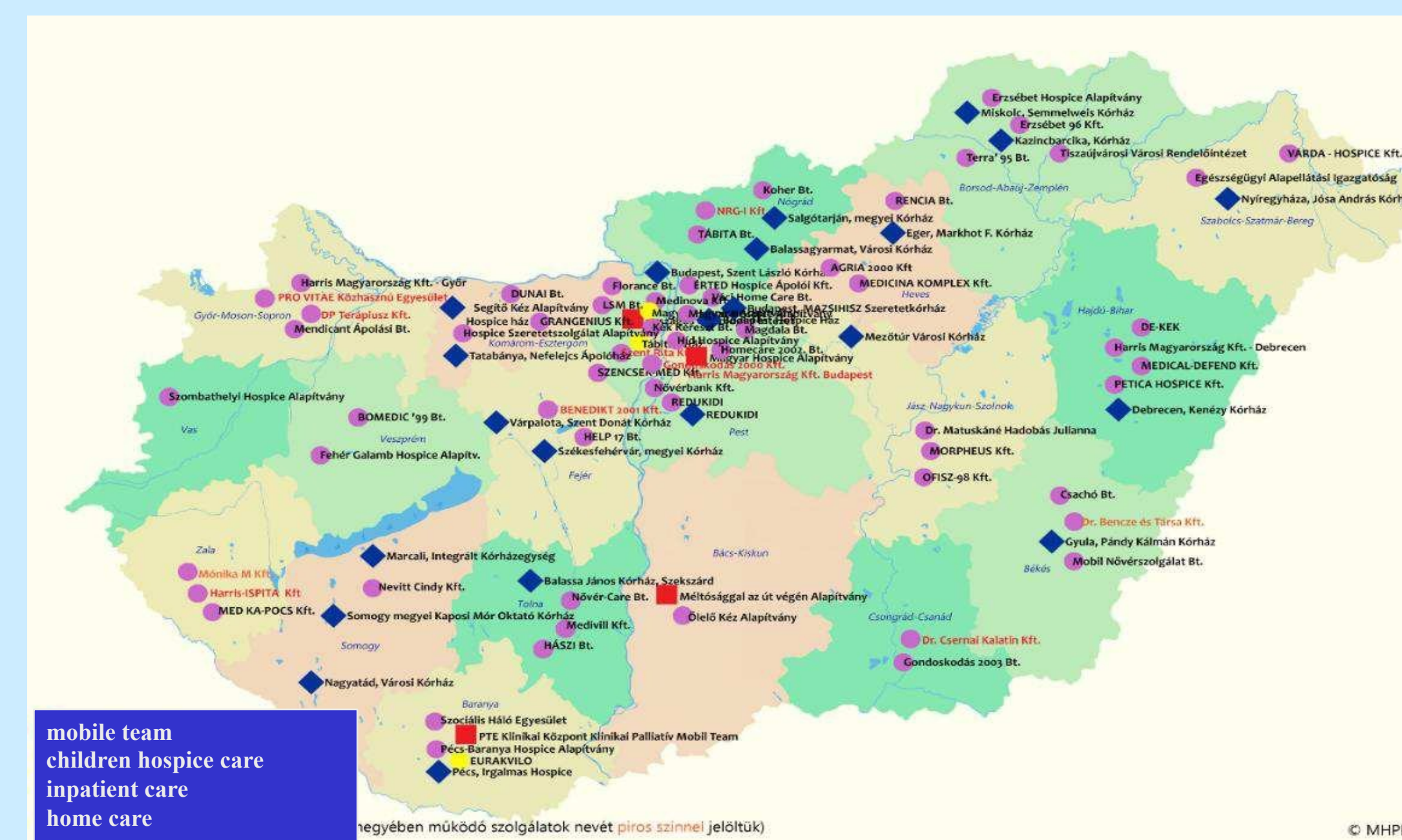


Figure 4.: Territorial distribution of hospice providers in Hungary

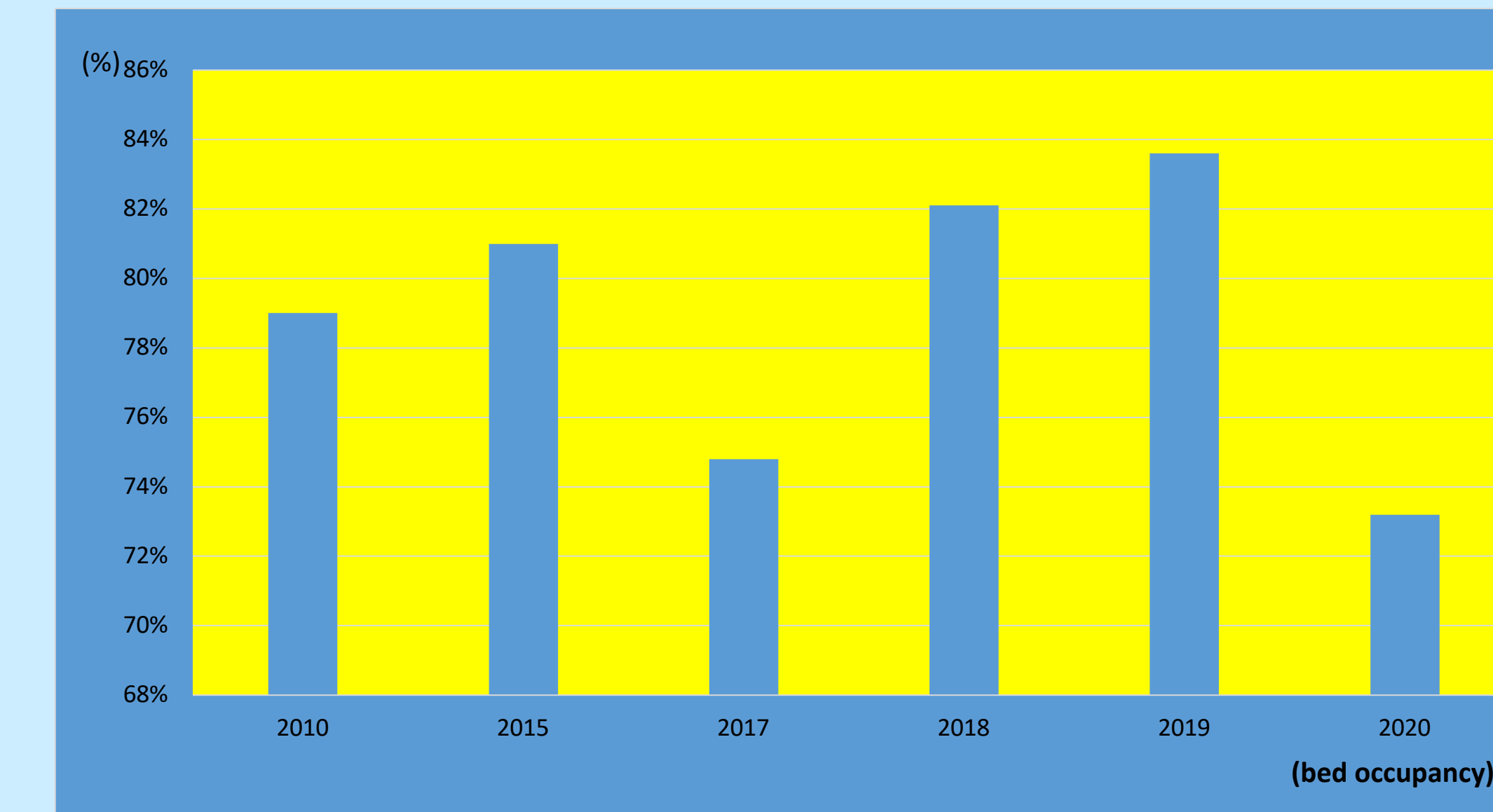


Figure 2.:
Bed occupancy in inpatient hospice care in Hungary, 2010-2020

	2019	2020
Number of cases treated	7017	7 124
Number of hospice days	200.228	190.045
Average day of care	28.5	26.7
Average cost per day (HUF)	4793	4903
Average cost of care per case (HUF)	136.781	130.803

Table 1.: Comparison of home hospice care data from 2019 to 2020

Difficulties in Hungarian hospice-palliative care by services:

1. patients are taken to the hospice late
2. financial difficulties, underfunding
3. lack of information and cooperation (mainly on the part of GPs)
4. lack of health professionals member
5. uncertainty about the order (eg terminal status)
6. problems of approach
7. socially disadvantaged families
8. finding other resources
9. infrastructure problems
10. problems with the financier
11. more hospice beds would be needed, there is a lot of demand
12. only one visit can be counted per day
13. communication problems caused the epidemic situation
14. lack of coverage for additional costs due to the epidemic
15. lack of coverage for fuel costs. "

Table 2.: Major supply difficulties by services

Source:

https://hospice.hu/docu/Osszefoglalas_a_2020_evi_hospice_betegellatasrol.pdf
https://kharon.hu/lapszam/XXVI_2022-2/szemle
www.neak.gov.hu

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