Understanding Palliative Care in Singapore

**What is Palliative Care?**

“Hospice and palliative care is a holistic approach to caring for patients going through serious illnesses. It aims to meet all needs (physical, emotional, psychosocial and spiritual) so as to alleviate suffering and maximise quality of life for patients and their loved ones. Staff and volunteers work in multi-professional teams to support these patients and their families, and enable patients to live their last days fully.” *(Definition from Singapore Hospice Council)*

Singapore has made great strides in improving these services, but access remains constrained due to increasing needs as well as lack of supply and awareness.

**Why do we need more palliative care in Singapore?**

Because Singaporeans are getting older...

- **By 2030, 1 in 4 citizens will be aged 65 or older**

And sicker...

**Top Three Causes of Death are Chronic or Related to Chronic Illness**

- **29.7%** cancer
- **19.4%** pneumonia
- **22.8%** heart disease and related conditions

**Available Palliative Care Specialists in Singapore**

- **2015 total inpatient hospice beds:** 173
- **Beds per 100,000 population in Singapore:** 2.9
- **Beds per 100,000 in UK, world leader in palliative care:** 5.1

**Available palliative care specialists in Singapore**

- **<1%** doctors specialised in palliative care in 2014
- **2.1%** nurses specialised in palliative care in 2014

**How much does it cost to receive palliative care?**

- **Inpatient:** S$290 per day
- **Home Hospice:** <S$100 home consultations
- **Day Hospice:** S$12 per day

**How much do Singaporeans know about palliative care?**

- **50%** Singaporeans are unaware of hospice palliative care

**Main Message:**

*Your donation to this sector can make a real difference. Singapore's palliative care charities help patients and their families in alleviating suffering and maximising quality of life at a vital level. For most hospices, the government provides a significant (and increasing) amount of funding, but the organisations are still reliant on private donors to make up the shortfall and to continue improving and expanding services. E.g. around 25% of funds are raised from private donors in some cases.*

*Something we can all do is to be more aware, i.e. to be more aware of what palliative care is and how it can help provide not just physical but also emotional and other important holistic support.*

*Dr. Ong Yew Jin, Medical Director, Singapore Cancer Society*