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Services to Support Dying at Home

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End of Life Issues

Hong Kong

- Highest life expectancy
 - 82 years for ladies and 81 for men
 - Ageing population
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- Life
 - Stressful
 - Extremely crowded environment
 - One of the best health care services

End of Life Issues

How well we are in Hong Kong?

- 22nd in quality of death index in a 2015 study
 - ‘living longer but not necessarily better’
-
- End of Life (EoL)
 - end of life services as the funeral service only

Hospice or Palliative care

- End-of-life care
 - Medical
 - Psychological
 - Spiritual
 - \leq 6 months life
- Hospice Team
 - Doctors and Nurses
 - Physiotherapists and occupational therapists
 - Social workers and Clinical Psychologists
 - Volunteers

Hospice or Palliative care

- suitable for people of any age, at any stage of a serious illness
- can be provided alongside curative treatments
- Aim
 - To assist patients dying with ...
 - comfort
 - peace
 - Dignity

Hospice care



100 SUBS...
...FAMILIES

一千個 ♥ 善寧家庭
資助計劃



Home for Hospice



- Hospice home
 - designed for end-stage patients
 - condition **CANNOT** be reversed
 - JCHH/SPHC, *“It is our hope that, through advocacy and exemplary care, we can enable more people to live a full, positive life and face death with dignity and peace”*.

Home for Hospice



- holistic, comprehensive, and high quality palliative care for patients with life-limiting illnesses and their families
- specialized care is designed to help control symptoms and improve quality of life
- patients can enjoy peace, dignity and the company of their loved ones in their last moments of life
- professional support and training to family members and caregivers

Hospice care / Palliative care

- Place of Dying / Death
 - Hospitals
 - Elderly homes
 - Hospice homes
 - Home

Place of death

- UK 23% home, 29% elderly home
- Taiwan 40% home, 20% elderly home
- Singapore 22% home, 12% elderly home
- Hong Kong 10% elderly home and home, 90% hospitals

Situation of Dying at Home in Hong Kong

- A person dies naturally at home
 - **MUST** be diagnosed or seen by a registered medical practitioner **within 14 days**
 - Otherwise, report to the Coroner and there may be an autopsy

Situation of Dying at Home in Hong Kong

- According to the laws of Hong Kong
 - body must be transferred to a legal place \leq **48 hours**
 - including boudoir and funeral homes



- "Jockey Club Community End-of-Life Care Project"
 - to pilot innovative end-of-life care service models for elderly people with terminal illnesses and raise public awareness of the issue need **NOT** to go to hospitals
 - an average of five days' reduction was found in the period of hospitalisation required by home-based patients in the six months before they passed away
 - public awareness and acceptance of end-of-life care services had increased, along with demand for them

Advantages of Dying at Home

1. A better place to die

- die with comfort and dignity

2. More convenient for family members

✗ go back and forth to hospitals and home

✗ rush to the hospital when there is critical changes or dying

Advantages of Dying at Home

3. Cost-saving

- dying in a hospital (> \$30k **ONLY** in the final month of life)
- dying at home (< \$5k in the final month of life)

4. Reduce the burden of the hospitals

-  the workload of the healthcare workers

Obstacles to dying at home

1. Legal Perspective

- requirements of reporting home death

2. Resources for Home Care

- very underprovided
- inadequate resources (manpower, equipment, etc.)

3. Social and Cultural Perspectives

- death is a social taboo in Chinese culture
- cause negative feelings of the carers

Let us consider ...

1. Overseas experience

- clear instructions, development plans or forming a team
- clear tasks for health professionals – what **MUST** be done to implement patients' choices

2. Encouraging Public Discussion on Death and Dying

- knowing the limits of health
- discussing patients' preferences for end-of-life care
- encouraging for the development and implementation of Advance Care Plans

LEGAL - Anticipation and Preparation

Advance Directives (AD) –

- Disputes over types of decision to be included in AD
- Refusal of life-sustaining treatments only or also basic care, “actions that are needed to keep a person comfortable, e.g. warmth, shelter, actions to keep a person clean and the offer of food and water by mouth
- Still a debate: Should AD be legislated?

Advance Care Planning (ACP) – No formal legal standing and ACP wishes not binding

What to do?

The Government

- incentives and public support systems
- to enhance the involvement of the community in end of life issues
- public discussion and awareness
- to overcome cultural and social obstacles
- end of life services with more comprehensive and intimate services, like home-based care and die-at-home services.



Around the corner

- “*End-of-life Care: Legislative Proposals on Advance Directives and Dying in Place*” released in September 2019
- to clear the legal obstacles in dying in place, including the home
- attention among the professionals and the public

What is next?

Services to support dying at home

- are already there in the community
- “只欠東風” (only requiring the easterly wind)