

Society for the Promotion of Hospice Care

As we come to the end of another year, SPHC is taking some time to review progress and directions over the last few years. Since 1997 and the opening of the Jessie and Thomas Tam Centre, SPHC has developed services to promote hospice and palliative care to a number of new audiences. With the support of a number of members from The Hong Kong Society for Palliative Medicine and The Hong Kong Hospice Nurses Association, we have also had many opportunities to outreach death education. Contrary to our initial fears the response has been positive.

The experience of death education– Is there still a taboo in discussing death and dying?

How do you feel about death and dying?



We often ask this question at the beginning of our training session. People may laugh a little, they may just look out of the window and not answer at all. Usually at this point, I will share my own experiences of leaning into a coffin and admiring the smell of the wood! To the great amusement of the funeral director, he laughed and said that only people who were dying could like this smell.

But here I am today alive (perhaps only just) but accepting the fact that in our own way, each day we are closer to our death.

This sometime startling fact so often escapes our thoughts, yet through our outreach and bereavement services, we spend a great deal of time discussing dying, but more often than not we end up talking about life! Dr Kissane at his presentation for the Society for Palliative Medicine Annual General Meeting talked very comprehensively about death anxiety and dying. He described elements of death anxiety as universal, and this was something *I* certainly felt following the words of wisdom from the funeral director! Talking about death and dying elicits very different responses, but we have found eventually there is very open discussion about areas such as euthanasia, suffering, loss, grief and dying well. There is much to be gained when talking about death and dying – for older people, carers, volunteers and youth, there is a strong desire to explore the mystic and taboo of death.

Coming events for the year 2002

- The Society through its members, has voted to change our Chinese name from 香港善終服務會 to 善寧會. By changing the name we hope to encourage more community members to participate in our different services and programmes.
- End of Life Care Training programmes, these are 3 month programmes open to any interdisciplinary team member to join. The courses cover areas such as dying well, case studies, communication skills training and teamwork. A training manual and CD Rom to accompany the course will be completed by the end of March 2002. For details call Rex Lau or Lesley Sinclair at 2868 1211.
- The Jessie and Thomas Tam Centre will be in its fifth year. Services continue to meet with children and adults who are facing grief and loss, whilst developing a number of additional resource materials.
- Community development will be launching a video, which aims to highlight the many values, beliefs and fears associated with death and dying.

Thank you to all members and friends who have supported our work over the last year, looking forward to the year of the horse! Please contact us at 2868 1211 for any further information.

www.hospicecare.org.hk