



# ASPAC NEWS

**VOL 2**

**Jan - June 2016**

## **VISION**

**“DO EVERYTHING FOR LOVE EVEN THE MOST ORDINARY THINGS.”**

With support from our community we will provide the best in compassionate, competent and loving care to all those who suffer from life threatening illnesses.

## **MISSION**

To empower people to live with dignity and hope whilst coping with illness and loss by providing quality medical care, spiritual and psychosocial support to patients and their families.

## **CORE VALUES**

**HONOUR AND RESPECT THE WISHES OF OUR PATIENTS**

**EXCELLENCE OF CARE**

**TO ALWAYS SERVE WITH COMPASSION AND LOVE**

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## EDITORIAL

We are happy to present the second volume of ASPAC NEWS to update you on our recent activities , along with articles from our patients and volunteers. For those of you who are not familiar with us, ASPAC (AS-SISI Palliative Care Berhad ) –formerly known as Assunta Palliative Care Center (AsPaCC) –was incorporated in July 2015 and is a company limited by guarantee and not having a share capital. We encountered many challenges during the last year when we faced a shortage of staff, had to move premises and start over again as a new entity.

We were forced into cutting down the areas of service coverage until we overcome the shortage of nurses. Despite these difficulties, we have persevered.

In 2015, we had 236 referrals from various hospitals. The Medical team made 1588 home visits and 68 hospital visits whilst the counsellors and medical social worker made 485 visits. 90 per cent of our patients have advanced cancer .56% of all our patients are more than 60 years of age.

We recruited new volunteers, implemented training programs and now have selected volunteers making home visits. The patients and carers look forward to these visits and enjoy the attention and care. Hand massages are offered and several patients have remarked '*I feel so pampered and special!*'

To cope with the demand for our services, we need to invest in a bigger palliative care team .We are keen to hire a physiotherapist and to recruit more nurses .We also need to invest in medical equipment (eg oxygen concentrator that can deliver 10 liters /minute) which can be loaned out (at no cost) to patients requiring high flow oxygen support at home. One unit costs approximately nine thousand ringgit.

As such, we are appealing for the support of generous Malaysians, both individuals and corporations, to assist us in this mission. Every contribution received is appreciated as these funds will go a long way to cover operational expenses that allow us to continue providing palliative care services free of charge.

Thank you for taking the time to read our newsletter!



Dr Lalitha Jeyasingam  
Medical Director

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# A REPORT ON THE 12TH MALAYSIAN HOSPICE COUNCIL CONGRESS WHICH WAS HELD AT SUNWAY CONVENTION CENTER ON 22-24TH APRIL 2016

BY DATIN SIVAMANI RASIAH

First, on behalf of the volunteers, I must thank ASPAC for having sponsored the volunteers to attend this Congress.

This Congress was an eye-opening experience and has left me in awe of the dedication and humanity of the people involved in palliative care. Each speaker succeeded in bringing across the theme of the Congress - "**Palliative Care is Everyone's Business**".

The youthful enthusiasm of the Chairman, Dr Richard Lim was catching. He traced his journey into palliative care by paying homage to all his mentors and how they had inspired him. The Chairperson of the organising Committee and Klang Hospice, Dr Michael Yoong showed a video to illustrate the daily routine of the doctors and nurses involved in palliative care. We applauded the love and selfless help of volunteers like the bubbly Magdeleine Liew who had volunteered at the oncology ward of GHKL and is now helping at the Palliative Unit of UMMC and the young girls involved in helping Kenny Lee who came to speak of his journey from being an active athletic boy to being wheel chair bound and totally dependent on carers and volunteers.

We also learnt a lot from the down-to-earth pragmatism of Dr Loh Ee Chin, one of the pioneers of Palliative Medicine currently in UMMC. Full of humour, she advises well-meaning relatives not to waste their money on expensive supplements but to give palliative patients what they love. AP Dr Tan Seng Beng kept us laughing with his sly jokes at his own expense, yet got the message across for the need for mindfulness in palliative care. He introduced us to **The Tibetan Book of Living and Dying**.



*Early bird ASPAC volunteers waiting for plenary session to begin*



*Dr Rosalie Shaw (Senior Palliative Care Consultant from Australia) with Maggie Chung ASPAC Volunteer .*

Even our own Intan Nazirah bt Dan from ASPAC showed us the extra mile the social workers went to explore all avenues to get help for their financially-strapped patients.

The speakers brought to life the "heroes" of palliative care like Dame Cicely Saunders.....We were fortunate to hear Dr Rosalie Shaw and her championship of standards for palliative care and the need for communication.

The next Congress will be in Alor Star and the theme is "**Palliative Care is Everyone's Right**"! This Congress was such a rewarding experience. I only pray that in my own small way, I can translate all this into my own attitudes and actions.

Thanks also to the "early birds" of ASPAC who arrived early and attended all the sessions, motivating each other! A big "**Thank you**" also to Dr Lalitha and Jenny who worked behind the scene to get us to the Congress.



*ASPAC team members at MHC Congress L to R - Dr Inthirani K, Dr Lalitha J, Mrs Kamala T.*

## DR LEONIE ZADOW FROM CENTRAL ADELAIDE PALLIATIVE CARE SERVICE, SOUTH AUSTRALIA SHARES HER EXPERIENCES OF HER RECENT VISIT TO MALAYSIA .

There's a wonderful Quote from Malcolm Muggeridge when visiting India and filming at the Home for the dying....-*"Mother Teresa's Home for the dying is overflowing with love, as one senses immediately on entering it. This love is luminous, like the haloes artists have seen and made visible round the heads of the saints. ...And...the light is quite exceptionally lovely..."* I thought of that quote every time I entered the offices of ASPAC. From the first to the last time, my outstanding impression is one of Light -embodied by care, dedicated skill, and, great heart.

I am a Palliative care physician. I come from Adelaide, Australia and my friend and colleague Dr Lalitha Jeyasingam invited me to come to Malaysia to spend some time in the community service of ASPAC as well as talking to some other palliative care groups, and participating in the Malaysian Hospice Congress 2016.

It was a very busy two weeks but an outstanding time for me as I experienced the broad reach of palliative care in Malaysia, got to meet some wonderful people, ate fantastic food and fell in love with Chinese cold coffee! But truly it was the luminous sense whenever I entered the ASPAC offices that will stay with me.

The team I work with in Adelaide has a community arm to our service -we serve an area with around 450,000 people. For that, we have 12 community palliative care nurses, 4 social workers, 2 fulltime registrars (training doctors) and 1 & 1/3 full time consultants -not to mention other allied health workers, volunteers and our art therapist and administrative staff who all work across our community and inpatient and hospital consult programs! Imagine how humble I felt coming into the team at ASPAC who serve a similar population size with 2 senior nurses, 2 training nurses, one full time doctor, one social worker and the wonderful Sr Kris who is counsellor, trouble shooter extraordinaire and seems to ensure everyone has a meal or snack to tuck in to, plus Miss Yap- the wonderful office clerk! To do this work with so few staff yet to still be luminous is a great testament to the dedication and compassion as well as true professionalism of all the staff!

The saying "*above and beyond the call of duty*" came to mind often -as Dr Lali and I travelled out one night at 2.30 am to see a patient, as we had numerous conversations in the evenings and over weekends with the on-call nurses and other staff regarding patients -and I realised the full extent of the care that is offered -and the enormous dedication of the small band of staff.

I so appreciated the time each staff member took to chat with me and explain some of the work they do. I also enjoyed the visits we made to patients and their families in their homes. I think it is the same everywhere but it always impresses me and again makes me very humble when patients are so willing to share their journeys with whoever comes -even if it's a strange doctor from another country.



\* Dr Anthony Gilbert (Seremban Hospice Chairman) presenting a souvenir to Dr Leonie Zadow

I was also inspired by the wonderful band of volunteers -who seem to come from all sorts of backgrounds and have such a wide range of gifts and skills to offer the program and its clients. Their passion to contribute, to learn and to engage with staff and clients is awe inspiring.

We had so many occasions to learn and grow and laugh together. I hope the small offerings I made to add a little bit of teaching and inspiration was worthwhile. Certainly I was blessed and inspired over and over.

PTO.....

Palliative Care is alive and very much growing in Malaysia. How important it is to recognise that, no matter the country, the race or religion, no matter who we are; as we face death we all stand as equal -deeply human and in need of each other.

## EDUCATIONAL AND TRAINING ACTIVITIES:

A half day training program on 'Communication Skills in Palliative care' was conducted for volunteers and staff on February 20th 2016. Teaching included short lectures and role play to improve skills .

*\* Nurse manager Sharon Dabi and senior palliative care nurse Ong role playing a scene where the patient is asking difficult questions around death and dying*



*Music and movement demonstrated by Jane Hoskings to participants .*



*Participants at Art Workshop intent on their work*

The 12 th Malaysian Hospice Congress was held at Sunway Covention Center in Bandar Sunway , Selangor. Pre congress workshops were conducted on April 22nd Two workshops were co facilitated by Dr Lalitha Jeyasingam, Dr Leonie Zadow and Ms Jane Hoskings titled *Art as a tool in palliative care* and *Music and Movement*. Each session ran over one and a half hours



On April 26th a teaching session was conducted at Hospice Seremban. 60 participants comprising of final year medical students from IMU, nurses from private hospitals in Senawang and volunteers from Seremban hospice attended the training.

*\* Sr Kris (ASPAC Counsellor) teaching relaxation technique to participants at Seremban Hospice*

## EDUCATIONAL AND TRAINING ACTIVITIES:



*Listening intently to Dr Zadow*



*IMU medical students , nurses and volunteers participating in teaching session .*



*Staff and volunteers with Dr Leonie at ASPAC office*



*ASPAC team members listening and learning.*

Dr Leonie Zadow facilitated a Volunteer training session on April 28th from 9am to 12 pm for volunteers and staff of ASPAC on 'Thinking Palliative' and how to improve communication with patients and families .

## EDUCATIONAL AND TRAINING ACTIVITIES:



A teaching session was conducted at Tzu Chi Center in Penang for thirty participants . They plan to open an in –patient hospice and are very keen to learn more about palliative care .

*\* Tzu Chi members with Dr Zadow and Dr Jeyasingam at the newly constructed Tzu Chi Haemodialysis center in Penang.*

A three hour workshop on Acupressure massage and Therapeutic Touch was conducted by Dr Eszter Fecso from Melbourne at ASPAC on May 21st 2016 . Participants were taught how to use some essential oils for gentle massage and shown specific acupressure points to be massaged for certain common symptoms.



*Dr Eszter demonstrating acupressure massage to two volunteers .*



*Sue teaching participants how to measure and cut fabric Sewing machine funded by Australian friends of ASPAC*

A three hour Craft session was facilitated by Senior volunteer Mdm Sue Yoong on May 14th 2016 . Sue is an expert at making cloth bags and she taught our volunteers how to make colourful bags from fabric remnants . We acquired a sewing machine which was paid for by ‘Australian friends of ASPAC’ . The volunteers will continue to make more bags , tissue box holders etc and these will be sold to raise funds for ASPAC.



*Voila! Fabric bag completed !*

## ARTICLE BY A COURAGEOUS YOUNG WOMAN WHO FOUGHT A BRAVE BATTLE AGAINST CANCER.

*We will always remember you, Mee Ling ...*



\* Chai Mee Ling  
BRAVE HEART

*"Tomorrow will always be there if you don't give up"*

I lost a good job because of cancer. I became too weak to walk for a while. The 6 cycles of chemotherapy and 15 rounds of radiotherapy made me suffer physically and mentally. I felt so lost that I didn't know what to do. There were countless nights when I cried alone. Not only had I lost my left breast, cancer had also caused me financial losses.

However, cancer has also made me a much stronger, tougher and braver person than before. It has brought my family and friends closer to me. It makes me realise how much they love me. An old friend took the effort to travel all the way from our home town to visit me twice in one year. It had never occurred to me that I was valued that much by her. My relatives also tried their best to come to visit me. Those who could not come for now will send me all their encouragement and well wishes.

Truly speaking, the journey of fighting cancer isn't an easy road. It requires perseverance and strong faith. There are lots of obstacles and hurdles to overcome that only you alone have to learn to conquer, one step at a time. Once you overcome these problems, it is a beautiful life ahead! It is very important to understand that you need plenty of rest and lots of nutritious food to fight each new challenge in this journey.

Above all, we must always maintain a confident outlook and a positive attitude.

In this journey of battling cancer, I have made many good friends, too. I once told my physio therapist who had become my friend that *"if I wasn't sick, I wouldn't have had the opportunity to know you!"* She answered me that if only 10% of her patients were as positive as me, her work would be so much easier.

Every time my psychology counsellor Ms Rani Chandra meets me, she will always hold my palms warmly and tightly.

All these little things cheer me up and encourages me to move on. When facing some adverse situations in this journey, do not worry at all, because your loved ones will always be there to support you to overcome them. Just treat it as an unpleasant event in your life that will soon pass if you can clench your teeth and fight it out. Once I thought that I had lost my life but now I have regained a new life. I appreciate and treasure my life even more.



*\* Never give up ! ....Mee Ling just  
before being wheeled into surgery .*

## SOURSOP! DRAGON FRUIT!

By Volunteer Coordinator Molly Kok

Soursop! Dragon fruit! Now what do these have to do with a patient who was on my volunteer home visit list since last November 2015 till March 2016?

Getting to know Chong Chee Kiong, was a beautiful learning experience for me. Here was a young man, thirty-one years of age, terminally ill with a brain tumour and completely blind yet so cheerful and full of humour.

I learnt from his dad –Mr Chong - that Chee Kiong had a problem doing his “number two” as he did not like to eat much vegetables or fruit. He was on strong pain killer drugs which caused constipation often. On probing, I discovered he loved soursop and was longing for it. I told him I would try to bring him one on my next visit the following week but if I could not, he would have to settle for dragon fruit instead, a fruit he detested but good for his bowels.

When I brought dragon fruit instead of soursop, he tried to weasel his way out of our deal. This became a weekly ritual and we had many laughs over his witty bargaining ways.

In March this year, he was admitted to hospital and even though he was not doing well, he retained his wonderful sense of humour and sunny disposition. His father, doting on him, was with him daily, fussing over him. Chee Kiong was his only child and remaining family member. Mr Chong’s wife had passed away from cancer ten years ago.

Over the next few days, he deteriorated and was in and out of consciousness. Keeping the father company, to give him moral support was physically and mentally challenging but spiritually enriching.

Mr Chong knew the end was inevitable any day soon but he refused to accept it. The pain in his eyes as he lovingly tended to his barely conscious son was heart breaking. Each time the monitor reacted to unusually high brain activity, he would literally jump to Chee Kiong’s side, and would have a one sided conversation with him.

This brave young man hung on to life longer

than the medical team had expected. When they moved him to the palliative ward, they told the father and Chee Kiong’s young wife of three years, that at the most, he would have two days but each day came and went and he clung on. He outlived the medical prediction of two days by another eleven days.



\* Chee Kiong was always delighted when Milky the pet therapy dog visited him

In those two weeks of spending so much time with the father at the hospital, it humbled me to learn of the selfless love and sacrifices he had made. He was a stranger to Kuala Lumpur. He had uprooted himself from Batu Pahat to bring his son to Kuala Lumpur for his medical treatment. With the son gone, he was alone. Mr Chong has since returned to his hometown.

This has truly been an enriching and learning experience as a volunteer with ASPAC. To be allowed in on a painful journey with the father and son, and towards the end, the young wife who was our interpreter- was a privilege and honour. There was difficulty communicating as the dad could only speak Mandarin, Cantonese, and some Bahasa. As for me, a “banana” (a Chinese person who speaks English much better than her native tongue), I struggled with my Cantonese but most times, actions spoke louder than words. He greatly appreciated my presence and moral support but to me, it was an honour to be allowed to share such an intimate and painful time with the family.

Soursop and dragon fruits will always remind me of a brave young man.

May eternal light shine upon him and may his soul rest in peace.

## NEW STAFF AT ASPAC

*We are delighted to introduce two new staff members and our newly appointed Volunteer Coordinator. We take this opportunity to welcome them on board and hope they will enjoy being part of the ASPAC team!*

### MR BOEY TYNG FANG – ADMINISTRATOR



Mr Boey Tyng Fang recently joined ASPAC as the new Administrator on 3rd May 2016. A Chartered Accountant and a member of the Malaysian Institute of Accountants, he decided to quit the corporate world for this NGO to experience an entirely different working environment. Aged 53, Mr Boey is married with two grown up sons.

His primary duties are to handle the office administration, financial records and reporting, cash flow management and human resource functions.

### MS ROOHINI A/P APPANAN – PALLIATIVE CARE NURSE

Ms Roohini joined ASPAC as a Palliative Care Nurse on 1st April 2016. She is an experienced nurse who is registered with the Nursing Board of Malaysia. She graduated in 2008 with a Diploma in Nursing from Masterskill University of Health Sciences.



Roohini's main duty is to work with the medical team which visits and provides clinical care to the home-based patients referred to the centre.

### MS MOLLY KOK – VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR



Ms Molly Kok was a long term senior staff member with Thai Airways International Ltd before deciding on early retirement. She joined ASPAC as a volunteer as she has always had a keen desire to help people in distress. As Volunteer Coordinator she will be giving supervision, guidance and support to other volunteers as well as making home visits to patients.

## WISDOM QUOTE

*“Any good thing therefore that I can do,  
Or any kindness that I can show to any fellow creature,  
Let me do it now : let me not defer or neglect it for  
I shall not pass this way again .”*



## VOLUNTEERING WITH ASPAC *by Maggie Chung*

*Maggie Chung is an ASPAC volunteer. She had many initial fears and hesitation around becoming a hospice volunteer. Today she makes visits to patients at home and in the hospital, offers hand massages when needed and has discovered happiness in the welcoming smiles she receives from patients and carers. She shares her experience in a reflective article below ....*

I felt vibes of pain and sadness upon hearing the word “*palliative*” from my good friend, Cath. She, however, invited me to attend palliative training and hopefully serve as a volunteer in ASPAC.

The many choreographed palliative training sessions propelled me to my first encounter with a patient in October 2015. Despite my anticipation of life limiting patients’ conditions, I was hesitant and dumb-struck during the visit. Somehow I found myself telling him about my grandson’s activities and started to sing and hummed foolishly.



*Visits by volunteers to patients readmitted into hospital brightens their days and cheers them up.*

Such was the first visit! Several weeks later, I visited my second patient with Nurse Sharon and Counselor Kristin. Madam Wee was running a high temperature and was also pale and pallid. After consultation with the medical doctor, the patient was whizzed off to hospital. I was glad to see her up and smiling during my second visit. Her ice breaker “*what a sweet girl you are*” melted away all my fears in my volunteer role. Soon, sitting beside her in quiet and peace seemed natural and put me at ease.

Madam Wee bounced back confidently after each hospital admission and her ever ready “*Thank you*” after each visit, gave me hope and confidence as a volunteer in ASPAC.

I felt encouraged and inspired by her upbeat mood and bravery despite her once telling me that she might not make it. I warmed towards her naturally and was touched when she gave me a good luck angpow on her 80th birthday. This surprise mini celebration with her maid and two church friends found her singing and laughing away joyfully like a little girl again.

Visiting Madam Wee has taught me to laugh and cry when one needs to. I now believe that after each cloudy day, the sun will appear. Simply holding her not-so-warm palms or giving her a peck on her cheek makes her day. And this has helped me to let go of my own pain and sadness on the loss of my late brother after his brave journey with lung cancer.

The “*Try a little kindness*” song continues to resonate in my volunteer role and I pray I am helped in my journey in ASPAC to love all God’s ‘*children*’, to treat them as I hope to be treated and to see in them, a reflection of the Almighty’s glory.



*Let's party ...Happy Birthday !*

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

Charity Dinner 2016 ( Reservations for tickets to be made at ASPAC office )

Date : 24 September 2016

Time : 7.30 pm

Venue : SJK (C) Yuk Chai, SS24/1

Taman Megah Petaling Jaya

Please support us to make the above event exciting and fun and at the same time, contribute to a worthwhile cause.

Kindly contact Office Administrator Mr Boey at 03-7783 8833 for further information or email [info@aspac.my](mailto:info@aspac.my)

### Vacancies at ASPAC:

*We are looking for compassionate ,enthusiastic registered staff nurses to join us at ASPAC . You must have a valid practising certificate , a valid driving license and your own car . Nurses who live in Kajang , Semenyih, Bandar Sungei Long, Shah Alam ,Subang are encouraged to apply . Training in palliative care will be provided . Attractive salary packages and benefits await successful candidates . Please send your CV and passport size photo by email to [info@aspac.my](mailto:info@aspac.my)*

*Contact Mr Boey at 03 – 77838833 if you require more information .*

## DONATIONS ARE APPRECIATED!

### *Be A Friend Of ASPAC*

*We depend entirely on the generous hearts of benefactors to sustain us financially.*

*Please help us help others. Be a Friend of ASPAC*

Name:

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A. By cheque attached (No. \_\_\_\_\_)  
Please make cheque payable to ASSISI PALLIATIVE CARE BHD  
Cheque to be posted to 32, Jalan 1/12, 46000 Petaling Jaya, Selangor.

B. Via direct remittance to ASSISI PALLIATIVE CARE BHD  
(Public Bank A/C No: 3-1968057-28)  
To receive an Official Receipt, please fax or scan the bank-in slip or IBG transaction receipt to Fax No: 03-77838899 or Email: [info@aspac.my](mailto:info@aspac.my) with details such as name of donor and mailing address.