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ASIA EDITION

LCPC marks decade of research and training in end-of-life care

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Asia's first palliative centre marks 10 years of leading the field in research and education to enhance and improve end-of-life care in Singapore and beyond.

The Lien Centre for Palliative Care (LCPC), Asia's first and foremost institute focusing on end-of-life issues, on 11 Oct 2019, marked a decade of producing and delivering high-quality research and education to improve the end-of-life experience for patients with life-limiting illnesses and their families in Singapore and the region. The pioneering centre, established at Duke-NUS Medical School in 2008, was tasked by the Ministry of Health (MOH) to lead the development of Singapore's first National Strategy for Palliative Care, which has, since 2012, guided the implementation of palliative care initiatives in Singapore.

In commemoration of its 10th anniversary, the Centre held a conference on the theme, 'Delivering Value at End-of-Life', bringing together leading local and international palliative care experts to share insights and best practices in the field at the Grand Copthorne Waterfront, Singapore. The roster of local and international speakers and panellists spoke on their latest research findings. Topics included the effect of hope on advanced cancer patients' survival expectations, the role of health communication in improving treatment decision making among elderly end-stage kidney disease patients, advance care planning and models of palliative care, and an overview of The Lancet Commission on the 'Value of Death'.

"Death and dying are traditionally taboo subjects. Yet, they cannot be ignored given the ageing population, high costs dedicated to patients at the end of life, and the fact that many patients die in pain and not at their place of choice, among other shortcomings," said Professor Eric Finkelstein, Executive Director of LCPC, and a professor at Duke-NUS' Health Services and Systems Research Programme. "LCPC conducts research aimed at improving the end-of-life experience for patients and families, and trains healthcare professionals on how best to deliver palliative care to those with life limiting illnesses."

Over the last decade, LCPC has become a globally recognised centre of palliative care research and education with a portfolio of local and regional research projects relevant to patients and policymakers. Its team of nearly 40 faculty and staff has garnered over S$5 million in competitive research grants, published over 70 manuscripts and has ongoing collaborations in eight countries. It has also developed its own series of courses, trained over 2,000 individuals, and incubated an online palliative care e-book, among other accomplishments.

Established through a partnership between the Lien Foundation, the National Cancer Centre Singapore (NCCS), Singapore Health Services (SingHealth), and Duke-NUS Medical School, LCPC's mission is to become the leading research and education centre for palliative care in the region in efforts to raise national and regional standards of care for the dying throughout Asia. For its next phase, the Centre will emphasise initiating and incubating interventions and new models of care aimed directly at benefiting patients. This includes early and integrated palliative care financing and delivery models, how to use patient decision aids to optimise treatment discussions, and how best to improve health communication.

Prof Patrick Casey, Senior Vice Dean for Research at Duke-NUS, remarked, "LCPC is extremely fortunate to have the support of the Lien Foundation, NCCS, SingHealth and countless palliative care and other health professionals within and beyond Singapore. We, at Duke-NUS, have also been privileged to play a role in its establishment and continued operation, and be part of its enduring legacy as governments, health systems and the wider public place greater value on end-of-life care in their communities."