

Embargoed for release on 6 March 2013, 6pm

Lien Foundation marks International Women's Day 2013 with "After Cicely", a documentary film on five Asian women who help people die a good death

06 March 2013

Millions in Asia suffer the pain of dying.

Five Asian women have turned their personal adversities into courage and strength to help others die a good death. As pioneers of palliative care, they walk in the footsteps of Dame Cicely Saunders, founder of the modern hospice movement.

Commissioned by the Lien Foundation as part of the Life Before Death campaign, AFTER CICELY www.aftercicely.com is an online documentary film on how these five inspiring women - two doctors, a nurse, a nun and a mother - tirelessly transformed care for the dying in their countries. They are:

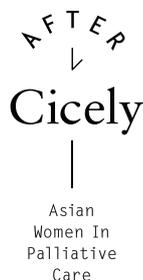
- Mrs Salma Choudhury, Founder & Chairperson at ASHIC Foundation (Bangladesh)
- Dr Odontuya Davaasuren, Professor, General Practice and Preventive Medicine Department Health Sciences, University of Mongolia (Mongolia)
- Dr Thuy Bui Thi Bich, Head, Dept. of Infectious Diseases Haiphong Medical University (Vietnam)
- Professor Chantal Co-shi Chao, College of Medicine, National Cheng Kung University (Taiwan)
- Sister Geraldine Tan, Administrator, St Joseph's Home & Hospice (Singapore)

"Women are the pillars and cornerstones of palliative care services and development all over the world. This film honours five amazing women – whose feminine fortitude and gentle grace mark their compassionate care for the dying and their families," said Mr Lee Poh Wah, CEO, Lien Foundation.

After Cicely is directed and produced by two young Singaporean women, Jean Qingwen Loo and Yang Huiwen, who strongly believe in the power of storytelling to create social dialogue. Together with Director of Photography Ong Boon Kok, they reveal the women's struggles, motivations and personal triumphs in their quest to bring care, comfort and compassion to the dying. They hope this project will help to humanize the palliative care cause and spread their love for life lived with dignity and free from pain.

Jean, an independent photographer and filmmaker said: "Spending seven months on After Cicely has reminded me of what's important in life - human relationships and the concept of time. It was a privilege to be able to witness the work of these women. Their strength, tenacity and gentleness have touched me deeply. As a storyteller, I wanted to share these stories to inspire people to live and relate to each other better. Death is a great equalizer and reminder that we are all running our own race. To die well is also to live well. This helps us keep sight of what really matters."

The online film, accompanied by a series of photo stories, was launched today at HUB Singapore in conjunction with International Women's Day 2013. A special set of postcards that complement the film will be distributed at various cafes across Singapore. These postcards give people a chance to express their thoughts about life and pain, and thank the women who have touched their lives.



Details:

AFTER CICELY – A documentary celebrating Asian Women in Palliative Care
Date of Launch: 6 March 2013
Duration: 20 minutes
Website: aftercicely.com
Commissioned by: Lien Foundation
Directed and Produced by: Jean Qingwen Loo & Yang Huiwen / Logue
Directors of Photography: Ong Boon Kok & Poh Yan Zhao
Edited by: Adeline Ong / Little Red Ants Creative Studio

Attachments:

- Appendix: After Cicely - About the Five Women & Palliative Care in Asia
- After Cicely poster & postcards
- Infographic: The Ending
- Photo of Professor Chantal Chao from Taiwan

Caption: Professor Chantal Chao, 65, counsels a patient with motor neurone disease who is unable to communicate beyond basic hand signs at Taipei Veterans General Hospital. Frustrated with her pain and state, the patient wants to return home and wants a higher dose of morphine. Known as Taiwan's "Mother of Palliative Care", Prof Chao is a nurse widely credited for the development of palliative care nursing and palliative care units in Taiwan. She is one of the five women featured in "After Cicely", a documentary celebrating Asian Women in Palliative Care.

Media Contact:

Genevieve Kuek	Qeren Communications	gen@qeren.biz	+65 9763 3110
May Tan	Qeren Communications	may@qeren.biz	+65 9791 3059

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About

LIEN FOUNDATION | www.lienfoundation.org

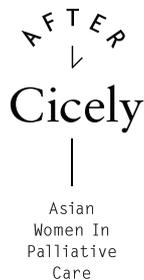
The Lien Foundation is a Singapore philanthropic house noted for its model of radical philanthropy. It breaks new ground by investing in innovative solutions, convening strategic partnerships and catalysing action on social and environmental challenges. The Foundation seeks to foster exemplary early childhood education, excellence in eldercare and effective environmental sustainability in water and sanitation. The Life Before Death initiative is one of the Foundation's flagship programmes. Conceived in 2006 to create greater public awareness about end-of-life issues in Singapore, it seeks to de-stigmatise death and dying by spurring 'die-logues'. Through use of art, design, films, social media and global research, the initiative has moved beyond Singapore. In 2010, the Foundation commissioned the first-ever global Quality of Death index that ranked 40 countries on their provision of end-of-life care.

JEAN QINGWEN LOO | Logue | www.logue.sg

Jean is an independent photographer, producer and writer passionate about adventure and creating social dialogue. Her commissioned projects include a safari journal for the Four Seasons Serengeti, documenting expeditions to Puerto Rico and Iceland for HSBC and Children of Mekong, a multimedia project for Lien AID. Jean has been recognized at the International Photography Awards and PDN Photo Annual, and was selected for the Eddie Adams workshop in New York City (2009). Female and Asian Photography magazine have featured her as an emerging talent. In April 2012, she held her second solo exhibition, Dear Thuriya, at the Esplanade. Logue is her way of making sense of the world through visual storytelling. She has partnered establishments including the National Arts Council, IDEO and various NGOs.

HUIWEN YANG | Logue | www.logue.sg

Huiwen Yang is a writer and producer. Prior to this, she was based in Shanghai as a journalist with Bloomberg News where she wrote on matters affecting China's economy and covered major events including China's National People's Congress Meetings and the World Economic Forum. Huiwen also reported for the business section of The Straits Times. Apart from financial reporting, she co-produced the Children of Mekong, a project on water for Lien AID (2010) and Changing Phases, a book on children in Southeast Asia (2007) for ASEAN's 40th anniversary celebrations. Having enjoyed the adrenaline rush of breaking news and chasing moneymakers, she has decided to channel that experience and energy into a new adventure and focus her efforts on media projects with a social and cultural impact.



APPENDIX



MRS SALMA CHOUDHURY
FOUNDER OF ASHIC FOUNDATION, BANGLADESH

Mrs Choudhury started the ASHIC Foundation in 1994 after the loss of her beloved son Ashiq to a rare form of cancer when he was just three years old. During Ashiq's yearlong treatment in a hospital in London, she experienced medical and community support to help the plight of cancer-affected children and their families, which were lacking in her own country. Deeply inspired by these charities, Mrs Choudhury wanted to make a difference in the field of childhood cancer in Bangladesh. The ASHIC Foundation funds a 20-bed shelter, which accommodates children and their families from rural Bangladesh who travel to Dhaka for cancer treatment. In 2006, it started a Palliative Care Unit, which currently has nine beds for terminally ill children.



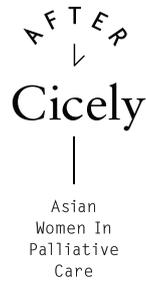
DR. ODONTUYA DAVAASUREN
PRESIDENT OF MONGOLIAN PALLIATIVE CARE SOCIETY
PROFESSOR & DEAN,
GENERAL PRACTICE AND PREVENTIVE MEDICINE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SCIENCES,
UNIVERSITY OF MONGOLIA, MONGOLIA

Dr Odontuya is known among industry practitioners as the 'Mother of Palliative Care' in Mongolia. She introduced the concept of palliative care in Mongolia in 2000 and spearheaded the development of palliative care policies, education and drug availability, starting with palliative care for cancer patients. Thanks to her efforts, each of Mongolia's 21 provinces now has an educated oncologist on palliative care, able to provide free morphine to patients needing it. Palliative care is also included in the syllabus of medical universities in the country. Her dream is to establish a national palliative centre complete with inpatient, outpatient and homecare services, as well as an educational hub.



DR THUY BUI THI BICH
HEAD OF INFECTIOUS DISEASES DEPARTMENT
HAIPHONG MEDICAL UNIVERSITY, VIETNAM

Dr Thuy has been working in the field of infectious diseases for 30 years and specializes in HIV medicine. In 2003, she was introduced to the concept of palliative care while attending a HIV training course held by Harvard Medical School faculty. She became more passionate about the subject and equipped herself with additional knowledge and skills, while travelling around Vietnam to train other medical and social personnel in palliative care. She also developed an e-learning platform for palliative care at Hai Phong Medical University. In 2011, Dr Thuy saw the birth of a Palliative Care Unit at the Vietnamese – Czech General Hospital for people living with HIV and AIDS, where she tends to patients and conducts training.



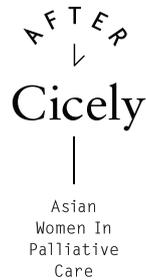
PROFESSOR CHANTAL CHAO CO-SHI
SCHOOL OF NURSING, COLLEGE OF MEDICINE AT THE NATIONAL CHENG-KUNG UNIVERSITY IN TAINAN
DIRECTOR AND CO-FOUNDER OF THE CATHOLIC KANG-TAI HOSPICE IN TAIPEI, TAIWAN

Then a nurse at the National Taiwan University Hospital and Taipei Veterans General Hospital, Prof Chao became interested in hospice work and palliative medicine after witnessing eight of her terminally-ill patients commit suicide because no one was able to alleviate their suffering. As “hospice” was a term unheard of in the 1980s and nursing schools were not equipped to educate students on subjects like patients’ psychology and care for the dying, Prof Chao moved to London at the age of 40. She benefitted directly from the teachings of Cicely Saunders, pioneer of the hospice movement and spent many summers studying at the renowned St. Christopher’s hospice. Upon her return to Taiwan in 1993, Prof Chao dedicated herself to the promotion of palliative care nursing, pushed for the development of palliative care units in hospitals and helped establish the Taiwan Association of Hospice Palliative Nursing.



SISTER GERALDINE TAN
ADMINISTRATOR
ST JOSEPH’S HOME & HOSPICE, SINGAPORE

Since the age of five, Sister Geraldine knew she wanted to be a nurse. Her motivation sprang from a trip to the clinic where she accompanied her grandmother for an injection and saw the pained and frightful expression on her face. That started her journey into the nursing profession. Sister Geraldine joined St Joseph’s Home & Hospice in 1985, just as the Home established a palliative care unit to meet a pressing need and care for patients with advanced illnesses. An active member in the hospice and palliative care community, Sister Geraldine has spoken widely to help promote awareness about end-of-life issues. She worked with Lien Foundation to roll out the “Happy Coffins” project at St Joseph’s, where residents at the Home designed their coffins and shared their pre-departure wishes.



Palliative Care in Asia

Asia is growing old, fast. Demand for end-of-life care is already on the rise, driven by ageing populations in countries like China, Singapore and Japan. Yet dying well is still considered a privilege in many societies, where millions suffer unnecessarily from unbearable pain and other debilitating symptoms that they lose the will to live.

Although palliative care was conceived and shaped into a professional discipline in the west by Cicely Saunders and her contemporaries, a growing number of Asian advocates have strived in the last 30 years to improve the quality of end of life care.

This effort is ongoing despite limited access to morphine, which is the essential drug used in treating pain, redundant bureaucracy and cultural taboos that impede social discourse and awareness of palliative care.

Back in the 1980s, palliative care was first introduced through the provision of palliative care services in more developed nations like Japan, Singapore and Hong Kong. Today, while such cities have advanced to various degrees, access to palliative care is in its infancy in other countries like Vietnam and Bangladesh. Described as the “neglected child” of the healthcare ecosystem, it often receives low priority from policy makers and professionals who struggle to manage modest budgets and inadequate infrastructure. This has led to a growing handful of dedicated charities and healthcare workers who champion the enormous task of providing treatment for those in pain.

Despite the complexities involved, the outlook for palliative care in Asia is positive. The Asia Pacific Hospice Palliative Care Network provides a platform where practitioners in the region can connect through various programmes like specialist courses and clinical mentorship, where interdisciplinary teams exchange knowledge and build camaraderie.

Working in tandem with growing interest on the ground, research groups like the Lien Centre for Palliative Care develop projects that study various aspects of the palliative care paradigm to shape policies for the better.

As more people join in the social conversation on a good death and governments respond through supportive measures, it is only a matter of time till more in Asia will be spared the agony of unnecessary suffering.

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