

EMBARGOED FOR RELEASE AT NOON ON 12 NOV 2008

'DIE-LOGUES' GARNER VOICES FROM THE PUBLIC

Survey by Lien Centre of Palliative Care reveals top wishes of those wanting to plan for end-of-life care

12 Nov Singapore

1. People from all walks of life are joining 'Mr Charity', Gerard Ee and local celebrity Dongfang Billy to talk about death and dying. The ***Life Before Death*** campaign launched by the Lien Foundation has garnered the participation of more than 80 people in response to the call to break the conspiracy of silence surrounding death.
2. At the press conference today, Mr Gerard Ee, a tireless champion for charity and the needy, said, "We needn't be afraid to talk about death. On the contrary, it poses chances for reflection, reconciliation and regeneration." Mr Ee is one of the key persons featured on two documentaries, one in English and another in Chinese, that seek to create 'die-logues' amongst the public and viewers about end-of-life matters.
3. Echoing this point, celebrity Dongfang Billy said, "We cannot choose how we are born, but we can choose to plan how we want to say goodbye. If we are faced with a terminal illness, we have a better chance of taking steps towards dying well." Billy will host an "interactive" documentary with participation, comments and views from the public. The documentary will journey into the heartlands of Singapore, with 'die-logues' hosted by Billy, in coffee shops and public places.

On DIE-logues

4. To date, more than 80 people have responded to the campaign's call for 'die-logues'. They come from all walks of life - ranging from professionals, executives and academics, to homemakers, retirees and clerical assistants. Some have been interviewed for a series of stories on the website www.lifebeforedeath.sg. Others will be featured in the documentaries and the 'Legacy Albums', which are initiatives taken to celebrate the lives of those who are seriously or terminally ill. Through these efforts, the *Life Before Death* campaign hopes to shed greater light on the wishes of people regarding end-of-life.

Survey on wishes in end-of-life care

5. In a survey of 104 people conducted at a seminar on decisions in end-of-life care, 93% of those surveyed wanted to do so with their family. 44% of them wanted their children to make care decisions on their behalf when they are unable to do so for themselves. This seminar on advance care planning¹, organized by the Singapore Cancer Society and Tan Tock Seng Hospital, took place in October 2007. 65.7% of the participants had engaged in some form of advance care planning and 29.4% had thought about it, but did not take any action.
6. Respondents gave their top three reasons for ending active treatment: Inability of medical treatment to cure medical condition (63.5%), loss of mental ability (33.7%) and when the individual has become a financial burden to loved ones (32.7%). Should they be nearing the end of life, most respondents wanted to be respected and valued, that is to be treated with love (57.7%), and to obtain spiritual comfort (49%).

¹ **Advance care planning** is a process enabling a patient to express wishes about his or her future health care in consultation with their health care providers, family members and other important people in their lives. Based on the ethical principle of patient autonomy and the legal doctrine of patient consent, advance care planning helps to ensure that the concept of consent is respected if the patient becomes incapable of participating in treatment decisions.

7. Most of the participants for this survey, if given a choice, valued the importance of planning and making known their wishes about end-of-life matters. The majority of the respondents agreed that advance care planning is important (93.9%). Sparking 'die-logues' through campaigns such as *Life Before Death* will serve to increase the desire for more straight talk and hopefully, timely decisions on end-of-life matters, before it is too late.

~~~~~00~~~~~

**Media enquiries:**

Genevieve Kuek  
Qeren Communications  
Tel: 97633110  
gen@qeren.biz

**About Lien Foundation**

[www.lienfoundation.org](http://www.lienfoundation.org)

The Lien Foundation was founded by Dr. Lien Ying Chow, an eminent Asian business leader, banker and hotelier. The Foundation pioneers new ground in philanthropy by investing in innovative solutions, convening strategic partnerships and catalyzing action on social and environmental challenges. It seeks to enhance educational opportunities for the disadvantaged and the development of nascent fields of studies; excellence in eldercare; and environmental sustainability in water and sanitation.

The Foundation has long championed the cause to improve care for the dying. In 2006, it launched the first scholarships and fellowships in palliative care for doctors and nurses. It also created the inaugural *Life Before Death* campaign to increase public awareness of hospice palliative care. This year, it started Asia's first centre for research and training in palliative care, *The Lien Centre for Palliative Care*.

**About the *Life Before Death* campaign**

[www.lifebeforedeath.sg](http://www.lifebeforedeath.sg)

First launched in 2006, the *Life Before Death* campaign was conceived and spearheaded by the Lien Foundation. It seeks to dispel the taboo of death and to raise awareness about hospice palliative care in Singapore.

The campaign in 2008/09 aims to spark 'die-logues' on death and dying well by opening up meaningful conversations on this topic through documentaries, advertisements, radio shows, a dedicated website and a first-ever street poll on death attitudes in Singapore. Included in this initiative are specially created 'Legacy Albums' that celebrate the lives of those with terminal or serious illnesses and a booklet for caregivers based on the true story of a caregiver.

*On DIE-logues*