

## ***PRESS RELEASE***



### **Region's foremost centre for palliative care for research and education takes off**

**SINGAPORE, 14 October 2008** – Asia's first palliative care research and training centre to be set up in Singapore has taken off.

The Lien Centre for Palliative Care fills the gap for formal research about dying and end-of-life care. The need has become more pressing as the country grapples with an aging population.

End-of-life issues have become central to Singapore's healthcare policies, especially those that shape the provision of health services.

Death and dying are traditionally taboo subjects in countries in Asia. While efforts to take the shroud off the subject of death have progressed much over the years; there is still a lack of knowledge about the needs of the dying in Asian communities. Research efforts in palliative care have remained relatively under-developed despite some pioneering work in this area.

In a groundbreaking move, the Lien Foundation, Duke-NUS Graduate Medical School Singapore (Duke-NUS), the National Cancer Centre Singapore (NCCS) and Singapore Health Services (SingHealth), established the Lien Centre for Palliative Care in March 2008.

The collaboration broadens the base of trained expertise in palliative care and research, in order to raise awareness of the cultural differences in attitudes and beliefs towards dying, and pinpoint issues of concern within the local communities. These efforts will inform healthcare policy-making and medical practice in tandem with the Singapore government's efforts to improve end-of-life care.

The Centre serves as a key node of expertise, research and training for the region, helping to raise national and regional standards of care for the dying. It will also serve as a focal point for palliative care professionals throughout Asia. The East-West connection in palliative care will be strengthened by the Centre's strong links with Duke University's Centre for Palliative Care and Centre for Care at the End of Life in the United States.

The Lien Centre for Palliative Care is now training 20 doctors and nurses from Singapore and the region. They are enrolled in the Graduate Certificate Course in Palliative Care from Flinders University, Australia. Some of them are on fellowships and scholarships from the Lien Foundation. Others are on clinical fellowships at the NCCS and the teaching programmes of the Asia Palliative Hospice Care Network.

Said Centre director, Dr Cynthia Goh: "The Centre is also involved in the teaching of medical students at the Duke-NUS Graduate Medical School Singapore and the NUS Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine."

Research programmes have been initiated to look into the care Singaporeans have been receiving during the last year of life, and preferences of the man in the street towards the type and place of care.

Research collaborations have been established not only with Duke University, but also locally with the Departments of Social Work and Sociology of the National University of Singapore, hospitals of both SingHealth and the National Healthcare Group, the community hospice services, and with the Ministry of Health.

Service development programmes are also being planned, including a strategy to improve the standards of hospice home care, and a model for bereavement care.

The Lien Foundation is contributing S\$7.5 million over five years to set up the Centre, with potential for a further collaboration. This sum is being matched dollar-for-dollar by the Singapore government.

Mrs Margaret Lien, Chairman of the Lien Foundation, graced the opening of the Lien Centre for Palliative Care, which was attended by 150 doctors and professionals involved in palliative and hospice care. She said: "Care for the dying will improve as hospice palliative care gets mainstreamed into our healthcare systems. I am confident that the Centre is a positive move towards that direction. The Centre's efforts will increase capacity for better hospice palliative care - from hospices, hospitals, nursing homes and to the very homes of the dying."

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### **About the Lien Centre for Palliative Care**

The Lien Centre for Palliative Care is Asia's first centre for training and research in end-of-life care. As a multi-agency collaboration, the Centre will leverage upon the research, educational, clinical and philanthropic leadership and expertise of the following institutions: Lien Foundation, Duke-NUS Graduate Medical School Singapore, SingHealth and the National Cancer Centre Singapore. The Centre aims to build up a strong pool of palliative healthcare professionals and help shape public health policies through enlightened research.

### **About the Lien Foundation**

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

The Lien Foundation was founded by Dr. Lien Ying Chow, an eminent business leader, banker and hotelier. His influence extended beyond the private sector and Singapore, as a community leader, diplomat and philanthropist.

Today the Lien Foundation continues Dr Lien Ying Chow's legacy of good work in helping the needy and deprived in our society. The Foundation drives institutional capacity building to address crucial community needs, and empowers individuals to reach their full potential. It is pioneering new ground for organized philanthropy in Singapore by convening strategic partnerships and catalyzing action on social and environmental challenges.

Besides championing excellence in eldercare, the Foundation also seeks to enhance educational opportunities for the disadvantaged and the development of nascent fields of studies; and promoting environmental sustainability in water and sanitation.

### **About Duke-NUS Graduate Medical School Singapore**

***[www.duke-nus.edu.sg](http://www.duke-nus.edu.sg)***

The Duke-NUS Graduate Medical School Singapore was established in 2005 as a strategic collaboration between the Duke University School of Medicine, located in the United States and the National University of Singapore. Duke-NUS offers a graduate-entry, 4-year medical programme based on the unique Duke model of education, with one year dedicated to independent study and research projects of a basic science or clinical nature. The first batch of students started term on 1 August 2007. As a player in Singapore's biomedical community, Duke-NUS has identified four Strategic Research Programmes: Cancer & Stem Cell Biology, Neurobehavioral Disorders, Infectious Diseases and Cardiovascular & Metabolic Disorders. A fifth programme in Health Services Research was added in December 2007.

For more information on the Duke-NUS Graduate Medical School Singapore, visit [www.duke-nus.edu.sg](http://www.duke-nus.edu.sg). For Duke University, please visit: [www.duke.edu](http://www.duke.edu). For National University of Singapore, please visit [www.nus.edu.sg](http://www.nus.edu.sg).