

PRESS RELEASE

Asia's first palliative care research and training centre to be set up in Singapore

Lien Centre for Palliative Care will fulfill pressing need for end-of-life research and care

SINGAPORE, 18 March 2008 – The Duke-NUS Medical School (Duke-NUS) has collaborated with the Lien Foundation to establish Asia's first research centre for palliative care. This facility will be called the ***Lien Centre for Palliative Care***.

The Centre will tap on the research capabilities of Duke-NUS through Duke University's established internationally renowned end-of-life and palliative care research programmes, with active involvement and support from the National Cancer Centre Singapore (NCCS) and Singapore Health Services (SingHealth). The synergy between NCCS' clinical expertise in palliative care services and the Duke-NUS pedigree in palliative care research augurs well for the success of the Centre.

While focusing on end-of-life and palliative care research with a special emphasis on local and regional issues, the Centre will also undertake healthcare professional education and development. It will build on existing programmes organised by the NCCS and the Asia-Pacific Hospice Palliative Care Network (APHN). As such, the Lien Centre for Palliative Care will benefit from collaborations that span four continents: Duke University in the USA, the world-acclaimed St. Christopher's Hospice in London, the Institute of Palliative Medicine in Calicut, India and Flinders University in Australia.

The Centre will fill the vacuum in end-of-life knowledge and training that Singapore currently faces. Research efforts in palliative care have remained relatively undeveloped despite some pioneering work in this area. As Singapore's population ages and end-of-

life issues take on greater emphasis, there will be increasing demands for robust data about the needs and aspirations of the population, which will guide the development of health services for them.

Bridging national and regional efforts

The Singapore Ministry of Health has identified end-of-life care and related issues as one of its focus areas. The focus will be on improving the end-of-life experience for patients and their families and ensuring the provision of quality palliative care.

This collaboration will complement those of the Singapore government by broadening the base of trained expertise in palliative care and research, raise awareness of the cultural differences in attitudes and beliefs towards dying, pinpoint issues of concern within the local communities, and bridge these more effectively with the existing system. These will enable the formulation of better-informed healthcare policies and medical practices.

Driving the Lien Centre for Palliative Care is a core thrust – one that will critically examine the clinical, social and cultural aspects of palliative care in Singapore and Asia, and develop appropriately contextualized policies and practices. The Centre also aims to be the focal point for palliative care experts in the region to harness expertise and collective knowledge, and facilitate collaborative efforts.

The Lien Foundation initiated the setting up of the Centre with a S\$7.5 million commitment over a period of five years, which will be matched dollar-for-dollar by the Singapore government. The Lien Foundation's initiative to set up the Centre is part of its drive to forge excellence in eldercare, a key focus area for the Foundation. There is potential for further collaboration between Duke-GMS and the Lien Foundation after the initial five-year period.

“The Centre is a key thrust of the Foundation's continued efforts to raise awareness of palliative care and the capacity of medical staff in this area,” said Mrs. Margaret Lien, Chairman of the Lien Foundation. “We hope to create a virtuous cycle where the experience of good palliative care will fuel demand from patients. Then more funds and resources can be attracted into palliative care to meet the growing needs of the aged.”

“Duke-NUS medical school and our counterparts at Duke University are heartened by the Lien Foundation’s strong endorsement of our joint vision to raise palliative care standards to new levels in Singapore. Together with the Lien Foundation, we hope to address pressing quality of life and death issues, and sharpen the focus of resources and efforts towards the enhancement of human dignity and the quality of life in the end-of-life experience,” said Duke-NUS’ Executive Vice Dean, Prof. Ranga Krishnan. “This Centre also offers us an opportunity to contribute to the Singapore community in which we operate,” he added.

Management and governance

The Duke-NUS medical school will own and manage the Centre, while its partner – the NCCS / SingHealth Services Group – will contribute space and administrative support.

A Board will be formed and will comprise representatives from the three stakeholder entities¹ as well as independent local community leaders. The Board will set out the strategic directions for education and research initiatives, approve projects and provide governance for the Centre.

Leading the Board as Chairman is Mr Ng Kok Song (currently Managing Director of Government Investment Corporation) who said, “The Centre aspires to be the thought leader for palliative care in Singapore and the region. We will encourage and facilitate the research and training of the medical community in the care of the dying.”

The Academic and Research Committee of Duke-NUS will have oversight of the Centre’s research and education initiatives. Associate Professor Cynthia Goh, a veteran palliative care pioneer and medical specialist, has been identified as the centre’s director. Dr Cynthia Goh is also on the Duke-NUS faculty.

"The setting up of the Lien Centre for Palliative Care is a dream come true for the palliative care community in Singapore. For the first time, real resources have been set aside for research and education. Up till now, those activities have been largely carried out by professionals working as volunteers in their spare time on a limited budget. We endeavour to live up to the trust the Lien Foundation has put in us, to use these

resources in generating and disseminating knowledge that has a real impact on the lives of our patients," said Dr Cynthia Goh.

The Centre will be located at the National Cancer Centre Singapore to foster close collaboration with clinicians caring for patients, to leverage on the vibrant academic and research biomedical science community, and on resources at the Duke-NUS campus in the vicinity.

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Notes to the editor

¹Stakeholder entities

- Duke-NUS Graduate Medical School Singapore
- National Cancer Centre Singapore / SingHealth Services Group
- Lien Foundation

About Palliative Medicine and Care

Palliative Medicine is the discipline which works to improve the quality of life of patients and their families facing the problems associated with life-threatening illness. Its core expertise includes the management of pain and other distressing symptoms caused by the disease or its treatment, regardless of the stage and type of disease. The National Cancer Centre Singapore (NCCS) is the first institution to establish a Department of Palliative Medicine in Singapore and in the Southeast Asia region.

Palliative care services help patients who are in the advanced stages of a disease by optimizing pain and symptom management, rehabilitation, as well as offering nutritional and psychosocial support.

Some major palliative care agencies include:

Asia Pacific Hospice Palliative Care Network
<http://www.aphn.org/>

Singapore Hospice Council
<http://www.singaporehospice.org.sg>

Canadian Hospice Palliative Care Association
<http://www.chpca.net/home.htm>

National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization
<http://www.nhpco.org/templates/1/homepage.cfm>

Palliative Care Australia
<http://www.pallcare.org.au/>

About the Lien Centre for Palliative Care

The Lien Centre for Palliative Care is a collaboration of the Lien Foundation and Duke-NUS Medical School that seeks to pioneer leading-edge research and training in palliative care for Singapore and the region. It will leverage upon the research, educational, clinical and philanthropic leadership and expertise of the following institutions: Lien Foundation, Duke-NUS Medical School and the National Cancer Centre Singapore. The Centre aims to build up a strong pool of palliative health care professionals and help shape public policies through enlightened research.

About the Lien Foundation

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.gms.edu.sg

The Duke-NUS Medical School 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. The Duke-NUS Medical School 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, the Duke-NUS Graduate Medical School Singapore 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 January 2008.

For more information of the Duke-NUS Graduate Medical School Singapore, please refer to the fact sheet enclosed in the media kit.