

# New palliative care centre to get \$17.5m fund

BY JESSICA JAGANATHAN

A NEW multi-million-dollar research centre has been set up to look into palliative care in an attempt to improve the lives of patients on their deathbeds.

The centre, which opened this month, also plans to conduct courses for doctors and nurses interested in caring for the dying, health officials announced yesterday.

Called the Lien Centre for Palliative Care, the research centre is a joint collaboration between the Duke-NUS Medical School and the Lien Foundation.

The centre will receive up to \$17.5 million in funding over the next five years, said the Lien Foundation's programme director Lee Poh Wah.

It is linked to the Lien Foundation, an organisation that helps provide for the needy.

Mr Lee said the foundation will continue to provide funding for the research centre after five years if the research programme takes off.

Located at the National Cancer Centre Singapore, it will collect data on palliative care, including:

- » the number of people dying in Singapore;
- » where they are dying;

- » whether they receive palliative support;

- » the level of service received currently; and

- » the reasons people opt out of such services.

"We don't have enough information right now on these kinds of question," said director Cynthia Goh, a palliative care veteran.

Between 3,400 and 3,500 patients are under community palliative care every year, said Dr Goh.

Medical directors of hospices welcomed the research drive.

Dr Tan Yew Feng of Assisi Hospice said: "This is timely, given that palliative care is moving fast."

He added that research could show hospices what services are lacking.

Dr Noreen Chan from Dover Park Hospice said that with an ageing population, there is an urgency to start planning for palliative care.

"We assume that most people want to die at home, but we don't know right now what Singaporeans really think of death and dying, so this research will provide good input on that."

Grants for the new centre will come from the Lien Foundation, the National Cancer Centre Singapore, SingHealth and the Government over the next five years.