

MEDIA RELEASE

NEW GRAPHIC NOVEL AIMS TO ENCOURAGE MORE ‘DIE-LOGUE’ AROUND END-OF-LIFE ISSUES

Singapore, 20 March 2021 – Is life-sustaining treatment always the best way forward? A conversation about death is often difficult to broach – where and when do we begin to talk about the end-of-life planning for our loved ones or ourselves? A new graphic novel commissioned by the Lien Foundation and illustrated by local artist James Tan hopes to address these complex, weighted questions. Titled, ***All Death Matters***, the 72-page publication invites both healthcare professionals and members of the public to glean insights into the emotionally-sensitive and complex issues that confront attending physicians, the dying, and their loved ones.

2 *All Death Matters* marks the first graphic novel in Singapore that spotlights the topic of end-of-life and palliative care; and is the latest project as part of the Lien Foundation’s ongoing Life Before Death initiative to improve care for the dying in a rapidly-ageing Singapore. The initiative, which started in 2006, seeks to spark “die-logues” through the use of diverse platforms such as digital media, art, design, film, photography and research. This is also the Foundation’s second collaboration with James Tan, following the warmly-received *All That Remains*, which sheds light on the struggles faced by persons with dementia and their caregivers. *(Please refer to Annex A for the book synopsis and a bio of James Tan)*

3 A nationwide study¹ by Singapore Management University in 2019 found that 53.3% of Singaporeans are comfortable discussing end-of-life matters and issues concerning their own death, as compared to 36% in 2014.

4 "The denial of death often deters us from thinking about how we can leave well. Graphic medicine, which is the use of comics as resources in enabling the discussion of difficult subjects or relating the patient and care provider experience, is a creative and understated way in encouraging Singaporeans to ponder about their end-of-life experience. More importantly, we hope to encourage healthcare professionals to reflect the perception of their roles alongside terminally ill patients and their loved ones." said Gabriel Lim, Programme Director, Lien Foundation.

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<https://news.smu.edu.sg/news/2019/10/05/smu-study-shows-singaporeans-are-more-comfortable-discussing-end-life-matters>

5 The comic captures the fictional narrative of a young doctor working in a hospital, and hopes to draw attention to the dilemmas and questions surrounding end-of-life planning and the importance of palliative care. *All Death Matters* draws inspiration from real-life experiences of healthcare professionals in Singapore, and was further reviewed by doctors who offered their anecdotal insights. Readers will be taken through the all-too-familiar scenario of the encounter of a family grappling with the end-of-life of a loved one, and having hard decisions to make; and for healthcare workers, having to handle the spectrum of emotions and communication that accompany such scenarios, while providing the best level of care.

6 *All Death Matters* will be available for loan at all public libraries from mid-April 2021. The Foundation is also giving away 100 copies of the publication to interested members of the public at <http://bit.ly/admgiveaway> from now till 4 April 2021. For more information, please visit <https://www.lienfoundation.org/>.

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#LiveWellLeaveWell

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About Lien Foundation

The Lien Foundation is a private philanthropic organization that pioneers solutions to improve lives and tackle the root of problems in eldercare and early childhood development in Singapore. It also works to improve access to clean water, sanitation and palliative care among diverse communities in south and southeast Asia. The Foundation's research publications, multimedia advocacy and design projects aim to seed public discourse in the hope that these can lead to better policies and practices in its various fields of work.

For more information, visit www.lienfoundation.org.

About All Death Matters

All Death Matters is part of the Lien Foundation's ongoing efforts to improve care for the dying in a rapidly ageing Singapore.

In 2006, the Lien Foundation started the Life Before Death initiative to create greater public awareness about end-of-life issues and de-stigmatise death and dying. The initiative sought to spark "die-logues" through the use of many different platforms such as digital media, art, design, film, photography and research. The Life Before Death initiative introduced several firsts: the global Quality of Death Index (2010 & 2015), Design for Death competitions (2013), 'getais' to encourage older Singaporeans to talk about end-of-life issues (2014), and 'Both Sides, Now' a community engagement project (2013-2019). Since then, public education has broadened and services and infrastructure for palliative care have improved and expanded. However, much more can still be done to break the silence on death and dying. In particular, medical professionals, by virtue of their roles, occupy a privileged space to initiate end-of-life conversations with patients and their families.

Seen through the eyes of a young doctor, *All Death Matters* draws attention to the often emotionally sensitive and complex issues that confront the dying, their loved ones and attending physicians. It is hoped that this graphic novel will offer readers empathetic insights into some of the dilemmas and questions surrounding care at the end of life, and lead them to ponder and engage in conversations on these matters.

About James Tan

James Tan is an illustrator, comic artist and art educator. His published works include *All That Remains*, a graphic novel on dementia and caregiving commissioned by the Lien Foundation, and *Final Resting Place*, a graphic novel on the Bukit Brown cemetery. He also wrote and illustrated *The World is So Big: An Artist's Sketchbook* about his travels around the world. His earlier works have been included in anthologies such as *Urban Sketchers* and *Liquid City*.