

# HOSPICE Link

Hospice and palliative care is a holistic approach that cares for patients going through the last stages of their lives. It aims to meet all needs — physical, emotional, psychosocial and spiritual — in order to alleviate suffering and maximise quality of life for patients and their loved ones.

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## Chingay Cheer for Home Care Patients

By Raneer Govindram, Manager (Community Relations), Dover Park Hospice

FESTIVE occasions are a time of joy and celebration. This year, HCA Hospice Care went all out to spread the festive mood to its patients and their families island-wide. About 240 volunteers spent their weekend afternoons on 20 and 21 February visiting the homes of 126 HCA patients to bring cheer and comfort to them.

The inter-racial group of volunteers, including 150 new recruits, comprised various professionals such as lawyers, doctors, nurses, teachers, students, engineers, police officers and technicians.

Joining the volunteers in the visits were HCA staff and council members, including Dr Seet Ai Mee, President of HCA, and Dr R Akhileswaran, the CEO and Medical Director.

Forming groups of three to four volunteers, each group visited two to three patients per day. Many spent meaningful time with the patients and



Bringing warm smiles and warm wishes to HCA patient Madam Neo Kim Toh (seated) are President of HCA Hospice Care, Dr Seet Ai Mee (3rd from right), and HCA volunteers Sylvia Tham (in white) and (standing, from left) Brandon Lim, Angela Tay, and Quek Zilin. Also in the picture is Madam Neo's daughter-in-law, Mrs Lillian Lee (extreme right).

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Mrs Esther Tan (extreme right, in pink dress) and her group of volunteers make joyful music for HCA patient Madam Rukini Bte Said.

their families as they sang and played musical instruments for the patients. Each patient was also given a goodie bag with oranges, *ang pows* and a 5-kg bag of rice, all donated by well-wishers.

The Festive Cheer project is the brainchild of HCA Council member Mrs Esther Tan, who is also the Chairperson of the Volunteers and Membership Committee. While the primary aim of the project was to bring cheer and comfort to HCA patients, another aim was to create a platform

for volunteering with HCA and to recruit new home care volunteers for HCA.

In thanking the volunteers for their participation in the Festive Cheer event, Mrs Tan said, "Our goal is to put more life into the remaining days of our patients. We are grateful that you have come forward to support us in this endeavour. Your visit has certainly brought cheer and comfort to our patients and their families and made a difference in their lives."

## Hearts in Action

DOVER Park Hospice (DPH) believes that the ordinary actions of volunteers can have an extraordinary impact on patients and relatives.

Patient Care Volunteers provide hands-on nursing and interact with patients on a personal level. During each four-hour session, they work alongside nurses.

Anyone wishing to volunteer at DPH is welcome to sign up for training and guidance. Interested Patient Care Volunteers can contact the Volunteer Programme Manager

at 6500 7269 or e-mail: [volunteer@doverpark.org.sg](mailto:volunteer@doverpark.org.sg).

You will make a difference through meaningful relationships with patients.



As the HCA Festive Cheer project aims to reach out to all groups in the community, HCA hopes to organise similar home visits to its patients during other festive occasions such as Hari Raya, Deepavali and Christmas. 🦋

## Daffodil Day — Celebrating Hope



THE Singapore Cancer Society (SCS) commemorated February with a month-long Daffodil Day drive



to raise awareness and funds to help fight cancer. Representing new life after a cold winter, the daffodil is an international symbol of hope for people afflicted with cancer. Purchase a Daffodil Hope Bear at \$12 or a Daffodil Pin at \$2 at 15 Enggor Street Realty Centre #04-01 whilst stocks last.

Bulk orders are welcome. Please call Ms Nazlin Hazhar at 6421 5880 or e-mail: [nazlin\\_hazhar@singaporecancersociety.org.sg](mailto:nazlin_hazhar@singaporecancersociety.org.sg). Proceeds will go to needy cancer patients. Please visit [www.singaporecancersociety.org.sg](http://www.singaporecancersociety.org.sg) for more merchandise. 🦋



# Hundreds Queue for Discounted Mammogram

By Janet Ling, Assistant Manager, Public Education & Marketing Communications Department, Singapore Cancer Society

THE Serangoon Community Club was abuzz with activity on the Saturday of 23 January. Outside the Mammobus, a long queue had formed, consisting of women who had each received a letter inviting them to get a subsidised mammogram screening under the Celebrate Wellness Programme.

Besides the Mammobus, a host of other activities had been organised, including workshops on healthy cooking and talks on mental wellness, breast cancer, colorectal cancer and financial management. The women also learnt about breast self-examination, BMI tests and picked up Faecal Occult Blood Test kits, a screening tool that detects blood in the stools.

Launching the inaugural Celebrate Wellness Road Show was Mrs Lim Hwee Hua, Minister in the Prime Minister's Office, Second Minister for Finance and Transport, and Member of Parliament for Aljunied GRC — Serangoon Division. The Minister urged women to start living healthily by taking the first step of having mammogram screening done.

In the first phase of the Celebrate Wellness Programme, more than 47,000 women from the North East District were the first to enjoy the subsidised mammogram. Currently, a mammogram costs \$100 but a 50



Minister Lim Hwee Hua giving the welcome address.

percent subsidy has been provided jointly by the Health Promotion Board and Singapore Totalisator Board (Tote Board). Under the Celebrate Wellness Programme, through further generous funding from the Tote Board, women can now enjoy a further \$25 subsidy over the already subsidised rate of \$50 at participating polyclinics. The two-year programme ends in December 2011.

At the event, the Minister also announced that women who have their first mammogram screening under the Celebrate Wellness Programme

will enjoy the subsidised rate of \$25 even when they go for their second mammogram in two years. This further subsidy is made possible through the generosity of the Khoo Teck Puat Foundation.

A highlight of the event, which attracted over 700 participants, was the appearance of cancer survivors Ms Koh Chieng Mun, a well-known celebrity, and Ms Irene Chiang, a member of the SCS Reach To Recovery (Breast Cancer) Support Group. They inspired all with the sharing of their cancer journey. 🦋



Faecal Occult Blood Test kits being distributed free to Singaporeans and permanent residents aged 50 years and above.

## About Celebrate Wellness

Through a series of wellness road shows, Project Celebrate Wellness aims to rally all women belonging to different age groups, ethnic groups and backgrounds to make well-being the top priority in their lives. This project was initiated by Project WINGS (Women Inspiring, Nurturing and Grooming Singaporeans), led by the PAP Women Members of Parliament, and partnered by the Health Promotion Board, People's Association Women's Integration Network (WIN Council), Great Eastern Life Assurance Co Ltd, KK Women's and Children's Hospital, Tsao Foundation, Singapore Totalisator Board (Tote Board), Singapore Turf Club, and Singapore Cancer Society.

# Home is Where the Heart is

By Sharon Lee, Executive, Marketing Communications, Singapore Cancer Society

It was an eye-opening day for me when I followed SCS Hospice Home Care Staff Nurse Josephine Poh on her patient rounds. Hospice Home Care is a customised service which provides closer rapport and support for the patient, caregiver and family as opposed to an unfamiliar hospital environment. The patients' families welcome the nurses who visit them as though they are old friends. Such kind gestures clearly show the families' deep appreciation for the service rendered by our Hospice Home Care staff nurses.

That day, Staff Nurse Josephine's first patient was former ice-cream seller Mr Tan Wah Huat. "He is quite a comical person," Josephine quipped. "And he likes to be the first on the patient list. This frees up more time for him and his wife, Grace\*, to sell ice cream during the later part of the day."



Part of a home care nurse's duties is to log in the patient's condition.

We were welcomed with wide smiles at Mr Tan's home, where Josephine spoke to Grace to find out whether Mr Tan had experienced any pain or symptoms such as constipation or insomnia; medication would then be advised and prescribed as required. An oximeter was then clipped onto the patient's index finger to determine the oxygen level in the blood and to register his heart rate.

While Josephine was speaking to Grace, I struck up a conversation with the 53-year-old Mr Tan. He

revealed that what had appeared to be a simple nose bleed had turned out to be nasopharynx cancer. "It all happened on 27 May 2003," he recalled in Mandarin. "Subsequently, it was a whirlwind of radiotherapy and chemotherapy that exhausted my Central Provident Fund (CPF)." When that happened, the Singapore Cancer Society (SCS) stepped in to subsidise his treatment costs through the SCS Cancer Treatment Fund. Last December, during a regular follow-up with his oncologist, an MRI scan revealed a lump on the left side of his neck. The day before our visit, Mr Tan had undergone surgery to remove it.

Married for 15 years, Mr Tan and Grace have a school-going son in Primary 6. As I gazed at their wedding photograph hung on the wall, I could not help but be reminded of the wedding vows: "For better or for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish; from this day forward until death do us part." Throughout the entire visit, conversations were peppered with humour. The saying "Laughter is the best medicine" is particularly true in difficult circumstances.

As we left for the next house,



Staff Nurse Josephine taking Mr Tan's blood pressure.

Josephine prepared me for the next patient — a 34-year-old gentleman with a young family. Each of the three SCS nurses makes about five visits per day and, at every house, the basic procedures are performed. Depending on the needs of the patient, there may also be non-routine work such

as changing the stoma bag.

At the last house, Josephine taught the domestic helper how to securely transfer her elderly employer from a stationary location, such as the bed or armchair, to the wheelchair.

**Throughout the entire visit, conversations were peppered with humour. The saying "Laughter is the best medicine" is particularly true in difficult circumstances.**

As I watched Josephine tend to the patient, I felt glad that these families had chosen Hospice Home Care as the end-of-life care for their loved ones. As healer and author Francis MacNutt says, "Concern and love are communicated far more by touch than by words alone." 🦋

*\*Name changed to protect privacy. Mr Tan Wah Huat has given consent to the use of his name and photo.*

# Learning How to Live from the Dying

By Tan Yan Yu, Student on Work Attachment at HCA Hospice Care

*You never know how fast you can run  
until you are running for your life;  
You never know how well you can live  
until you are running out of time.*

— Anonymous

SUCH is the irony of life, and nothing captures it more adequately than the sick and those afflicted with cancer. Not everybody is as wealthy as Steve Jobs, and not every cancer patient is as accomplished as Dr William Tan; yet, it does not make them any less brave. For they, too, have their stories to tell... so I listened and I learnt.

The day that my veil of ignorance was lifted came when I followed Nurse Alice from HCA Hospice Care on her regular home visits to patients with life-limiting illnesses. Shouldering her heavy canvas bag stuffed with medical equipment and files, she trekked her way through HDB estates all around Singapore to distribute prescriptions, love and advice. Watching her labour incessantly, I remember marvelling and thinking, “Whoever said altruism is dead would have to eat his words.”

These patients at home are often so weak that it takes physical strength as well as the strength of their souls to complete even the simplest task we would otherwise

have taken for granted — going to the market, using the toilet, even fetching a glass of water without help.

There was a patient I clearly remember. When I entered the house,

I first saw, to my surprise, her small, fragile frame curled piteously on a wide, king-sized bed. Then I noticed that both her legs were amputated, and that she was wearing only a thin T-shirt with adult diapers hitched up uncomfortably around her waist. Looking up at her wedding photo hung above the bed, I wondered how she felt, so entirely stripped of her dignity, only really half a person left.

In the past, whenever the old lady had to go for hospital checkups, she had to strap on her prosthetic legs and hobble into a taxi, clutching her daughter for support. These inconveniences underscore the importance of Nurse Alice’s role. It doesn’t hurt that her services come free as well — “to add life to days, not days to life”, as the hospice motto goes. I like that.

For the rest of the day, it was a whirlwind of knocking, entering and examining the remaining patients on Nurse Alice’s list. Next was a sweet little old lady who discussed all the interesting ways to die. She also added, with a smile on her face, that she was satisfied with her life. Her words heartened me. There was also this young man, who had contracted cancer at the peak of



life and had initially hated the sight of his swollen, pale and diseased self in the mirror. But over time, he picked himself up, knitted back together the pieces of his life, reconciled with his wife and finally found peace and fulfilment in his remaining years.

From them, I learnt that cancer may reach our hearts but it can never touch our souls. And if the world is a stage, then happy endings are ours to make. 🦋

**“These patients at home are often so weak that it takes strength to complete even the simplest task we would otherwise have taken for granted — using the toilet, fetching a glass of water.”**

## About the Author

Tan Yan Yu is currently studying in the UK and plans to enter medical school in September 2010. The invaluable insights she gained during her work attachment at HCA Hospice Care profoundly impacted and enriched her.

# Song and (Lion) Dance

By Jean Bristow, Corporate Development Manager, Dover Park Hospice

IN December 2009, many groups performed for the patients at Dover Park Hospice (DPH) to spread some Christmas cheer. Through their music, the spirit of Christmas resonated throughout the hospice, bringing life and joy.

Little Heart Strings kicked off the celebrations by performing Christmas carols on violin and quickly stole the hearts of all present. Other visitors included Simply Friends, Main Wayang, American Women's Association Choir, Spring Chorale and Charis Ministry of Music — their wonderful performances created a warm, festive mood for our patients!

On 23 December 2009, DPH staff



Simply Friends lifting everyone's mood with their sweet singing.



Little Heart Strings captured the hearts of the patients.

came together and sang for the patients and their relatives. This yearly tradition allows the staff to give back voluntarily, in line with the Christmas spirit.

When the Lunar New Year rolled around, volunteers of the Jade group did a tremendous job of organising a memorable event for DPH patients and their relatives on 21 February.

The Yew Tee Community Club Chinese Orchestra played together with singer/guitarist Mr Daniel Ng. The patients and their families enjoyed

themselves so much that the patients were reluctant to go back to the wards. All present joined in, singing and dancing to strains of both Chinese and English songs.

No celebration is complete without food, and savoury food was there in the true Chinese New Year custom of overflowing abundance.

To top off the event, the Lion Dance group gave a resounding performance and our volunteers delighted in making out the lucky numbers. 🦁



Mr Daniel Ng and the Yew Tee Community Club Chinese Orchestra bringing music to the wards at DPH.



No Chinese New Year celebration is complete without a lion dance!

## Year of Tiger Kicks off with Roaring Good Time

By Tay Chiew Buay, Executive, St Joseph's Home & Hospice

TO usher in the Year of the Tiger, staff from the Economic Development Board (EDB) celebrated Chinese New Year with the residents of St Joseph's Home & Hospice (SJHH) on 6 February 2010. They spent the day decorating the hall and dining areas brightly. They also invited a lion dance troupe to entertain the residents and bring best wishes to all present.

The Harley Owners Group, Singapore Chapter, also paid their annual visit to the residents during this festive period. They came in their shiny



Harley Owners Group, Singapore Chapter, greeting residents with oranges and *ang pows*.

and roaring Harley Davidson Bikes on 20 February 2010. The residents had an opportunity to see them in action as they rode their vehicles right up to the dining hall in the garden!

Gathering at our dining hall, they celebrated with amused residents by giving them their well-wishes, oranges and red packets. A singalong session ended the day with high spirits. 🦋



The lively lion dance delighted the SJHH residents.

## New Year Calligraphy

By Lim Khoon Min



Calligraphy pieces brighten up the wards during the Lunar New Year.

FOR three consecutive years, Bright Vision Hospital has worked with the Mongkok District Cultural, Recreation and Sports Association (MKCRSA) from Hong Kong to showcase calligraphy art in the hospital.

This year was no different as the hospital hosted the calligraphy exhibition, featuring winning entries from a calligraphy competition held in Hong Kong.

The calligraphy art pieces were put up in the wards, bringing cheer to the patients and their visitors during the festive Chinese New Year period. 🦋

## NTU Students Get Kung Fu Fighting

By Lim Khoon Min, Corporate Services & Communications Executive, Bright Vision Hospital



The splendid performance by student volunteers from the Nanyang Technological University (NTU) Welfare Services Club invited yells of 'encore!'.

DURING the Chinese New Year period, a team of 20 student volunteers from the Nanyang Technological University (NTU) Welfare Services Club organised a special afternoon of song, dance, games and interactive activity for patients at Bright Vision Hospital.

The energetic students set the Yen Pei Hall alight with an energetic dance to the tune of *Kung Fu Fighting*. The patients were so enthralled by the

dancing that they cheered for an encore.

Later in the afternoon, the students paired themselves up with the patients in an art and craft activity, allowing them to befriend the patients. The evening ended with games that fittingly tested the patients' knowledge of Chinese culture.

From the delighted faces of the elderly and sick patients, all had an enjoyable and meaningful time of festive cheer. 🦋

# Holistic Care the Focus of Clinical Attachments

By Serene Tan, Training Officer, Dover Park Hospice



Serene Tan (extreme left) with the students from Nanyang Polytechnic.

**AIMING** to be the centre of excellence for palliative care education and research, Dover Park Hospice (DPH) supports and facilitates the education and training of different disciplines from different healthcare and training institutions. One way to do this is to facilitate clinical attachments at its premises.

The objective of such clinical attachments is to understand the philosophy of whole-person care and to appreciate how members of the multidisciplinary team work together to achieve this. Over at DPH, clinical attachments involve participation in ward work and structured clinical teaching sessions as well as attending ward rounds and multidisciplinary team meetings. In addition to rating the various aspects of the attachment against the goals of the attachment, participants are also required to share their thoughts by keeping a journal. This process helps the organisation evaluate the effectiveness of its clinical attachment programme.

Here are some excerpts from the journal of two groups of nursing students from the Nanyang

Polytechnic Advanced Diploma Oncology Course during their one-week attachment stint at DPH:

“The DPH posting helped me understand that each individual is different — whether he is sick or not, he has his own needs as well as strategies and ways of coping. Strong hope and a strong belief system put meaning in our lives; these are also essential components that inspire us, feed our souls and sustain us emotionally and spiritually.”

“Each and every aspect of all residents at DPH was painstakingly explored, including the remembrance of patients who had departed.”

“DPH takes care of patients and their family based on six dimensions of palliative care. The key dimensions include symptom control, psychosocial support and quality of life (QOL). What impressed me during this short stint at DPH was the team meeting, during which nursing opinions are highly valued.”

Although the clinical attachments were brief, we hope that they have made an impact in the lives of young nurses and strengthened the spirit

of palliative care. Let us continue to model holistic care for our patients, not single-handedly but recognising the importance of the team approach. 🦋

## Assisi Hospice Charity Fun Day

LAST year, the Assisi Hospice Charity Fun Fair drew a crowd of over 10,000 supporters.

This year, Assisi Hospice aims for over 180 stalls, including games stalls, food stalls as well as stalls selling fresh flowers, plants, books and costume jewellery. This event is co-organised with City Developments Limited and CBM Pte Ltd, with the venue sponsored by St Joseph’s Institution International.

Patrons to the event can look forward to the usual five-star food fare, including the ever popular M Hotel’s chicken pies, Pan Pacific’s sausages, Casuarina Prata, Deutsche Bank’s 14-metre fresh fruit stall, international fare from Korea, Japan, Indonesia and popular favourites such as *popiah*, *laksa*, chicken rice, *nonya kueh* and home-baked cakes.

Coupons at \$10 can be purchased from Assisi Hospice. Call 6347 6467 or e-mail: [ronita\\_paul@assisihospice.org.sg](mailto:ronita_paul@assisihospice.org.sg) for more details. 🦋

Date : Saturday, 29 May 2010  
 Time : 10am to 5pm  
 Venue : St Joseph’s Institution International  
 Address : 490 Thomson Road — opposite the Singapore Polo Club, next to SLF and MCYS Buildings



# Bollywood Bangra!

By Allard Mueller, Volunteer Program Manager, Dover Park Hospice



Volunteers show off their Bangra moves.

ON the evening of Friday, 22 January 2010, Dover Park Hospice (DPH) paid homage to Bollywood, in all its colour and music. In fact Bollywood celebrates life, so in celebration of its volunteers for adding life to the days of patients, DPH organised a volunteer

appreciation night (VAN) in Bollywood style.

DPH staff turned the HCA auditorium into Little India and many volunteers came in Bollywood attire.

Also present were two volunteers who decorated the hands of the ladies with henna. DPH Chairman Prof

Lionel Lee gave his speech, after which he presented volunteers with their awards.

After the award ceremony, a wonderful dinner of North Indian cuisine was provided.

This was followed by a Bangra Dance performance, which got

everyone on the dance floor.

Our Best Dressed Competition was won by Ms Wendy Tsai, who not only had the look, she had the moves as well.

Soon after that everybody was on the dance floor again.

VAN 2009 was an event to remember — with good food, wonderful people and a fantastic atmosphere! 🦋



Winner of the Best Dressed Competition, Ms Wendy Tsai (front) with three other shortlisted contestants behind.

## Residents Empowered by Choices

SINCE September 2008, St Joseph's Home & Hospice has taken on a project to cascade its mission and vision statement to all staff so that they can translate them into daily action plans. This has been done under the professional guidance and supervision of Dr Joseph Pious and Dr Mary Baker from Hawthorne Consulting.

The project empowered staff to give choices to the residents. For example, residents were given a choice of when they wanted their bath; they could also choose what they wanted to wear for the day. Such interaction between staff and residents fostered better teamwork among the colleagues; residents also felt more loved and cared for, heightening their self-worth and dignity.

This project has made a deep impact on the staff; here is what they say:

“By showing them love, care and compassion, we have made our residents realise how important and valuable they are. At the same time, working and collaborating as a team has drawn us grow closer to each other and lifted our spirits.”

— Nursing Aide Grace Alaban

“I feel blessed that we had an opportunity to put our mission and vision statement into daily action plans by providing our residents with choices. By allowing them to decide for themselves, it gave me a chance to show more compassion to the residents.”

— Nursing Aide Sheryl R. Tacazon

“To see them happy was the greatest achievement I received. I feel honoured for what I have done. We will carry on with this project to give them quality of life in the remaining years of their lives.”

— Nursing Aide Ilovea Madriaga 🦋



Nursing Aide Ilovea Madriaga spending some quality time with a resident.

# Peranakan Music Strikes a Happy Note

By Alvin Yapp, Volunteer, Assisi Hospice

I have been volunteering at Assisi Hospice since 1993. It all happened by chance when I was cycling past Mount Alvernia during my school vacation. Out of interest, I decided to drop in for a visit. It was my first time entering a hospice. Little did I realise that my life would change with that simple visit.



Alvin Yapp receiving his award from Mrs Lim Hwee Hua, Minister in Prime Minister's Office, Second Minister for Finance and Transport.

I found myself attracted to the work of the hospice. Perhaps it was the warmth of the nurses or the serenity of the rooms, with their balcony and private shower. Or maybe it was the fact that the patients would be moving on in life's journey that stirred my interest. Whatever the reason, I found it meaningful that Assisi Hospice was there to comfort and care for each patient. It made me value life and relationships.

Since then I have decided to use my passion for music and interest in the Peranakan culture to help raise funds for Assisi Hospice.

Recently, my friends and I organised a concert at my heritage home where young violinists performed traditional Peranakan

tunes. This is the second year that we are doing this. While the concert raised more than \$80,000, it also created awareness for a unique part of the Peranakan culture.

I have recently been awarded an Honoree for the Orchid Jayceettes of Singapore Junior Chamber International (JCI) Outstanding Young Persons of Singapore Award 2009, nominated by Assisi Hospice. The award recognises individuals who take action to make a difference in society. While I am honoured and humbled by the award, I cannot but feel that my involvement with Assisi Hospice is already a privilege and a reward in itself. It reorganises my priorities in life and reminds me of the value of relationships. 🦋

# Learning about Patience through Patients

By Jared Yeo, ex-student of ACJC and now a National Serviceman, who did a one-week stint at HCA Hospice Care

BEFORE stepping into HCA Hospice Care, I was nervous and unsure of what to expect. I imagined a hospice to be gloomy and the patients depressed. However, I was wrong. HCA Day Care Centre is painted in cheerful colours and surrounded by soothing music; the Centre has a welcoming air about it. The patients look happy and jovial.

A pilates class was going on and I joined in. This consisted of simple exercises aimed at maintaining flexibility and strength in the patients. I soon realised that the pilates class was just one of the many activities held at the Centre.

Next was a memory game and I volunteered to be the timekeeper. I even played mahjong with some of the patients, who were "experts"... I lost every single game! I also had the

privilege of joining the patients on a trip to the zoo and Marina Barrage, organised by some polytechnic students. What an enjoyable time we had!

Besides volunteering at the Centre, I also got to join doctors and nurses on home visits to the patients. Following them on their rounds, I got a peek into the lives of families from all walks of life. Observing the doctors and nurses, I realised that close communication is important in the relationship between the medical team and the patient as well as the caregiver. Being a good communicator and being able to speak in different dialects enabled them to understand the patients' problems in order to prescribe the proper medication. The doctors and nurses also exhibited genuine care and

passion towards the patients and their family members.

The week-long attachment enabled me to learn much about palliative care. I have learnt that care for patients is not just about providing good medicine and medical facilities, it is also about providing emotional support and genuine concern. 🦋



Jared Yeo playing a game of mahjong with HCA patients.



# 4 Steps to Beating Stress

By SN Sheila Chua, Staff Nurse, Metta Hospice Care

WE all need good stress to help us function at our optimum levels. However, bad stress or too much stress has adverse effects on a person, leading to physical and emotional symptoms. In 2008, there was an increase of 3.2 percent of patients seeking medical treatment in the Singapore General Hospital (SGH) compared to 2007. When bad stress happens, the body releases a stress hormone called cortisol. Elevated cortisol levels may result in several physical changes in the body, and prolonged stress may suppress the immune system, giving rise to body strain.

Emotional illnesses like anxiety, depression, sleep disorder and anti-social behaviour are the result of bad stress. Physical changes and illnesses include heart disease, migraine, irritable bowel syndrome, peptic ulcer disease, skin rash and dizziness.

Many people cannot relax because they have accumulated too many bad habits like poor time management and negative thinking. Try these relaxation methods.

## 1. Exercise and stretch.

Do stretches in the office to relieve tension from sitting down for too long. Exercise regularly. It promotes good sleep, improves blood circulation and detoxifies your system. Exercise has been shown to release a chemical in the brain which induces the feeling of well-being and relaxation.

## 2. Adopt a positive attitude at work.

Choose to be happy and positive at work. For example, smile more and respond positively to new assignments. Focus on the job at hand; do not keep checking your email every few minutes — it will distract you. Do not be overly preoccupied with promotion or



competition. Even if your work seems boring, look out for the positive aspects and enjoy working.

Keep your desk free of clutter and tidy up after work. The computer screen should be at eye level, and your elbows should rest comfortably on the chair with your feet flat on the ground. Do not sit on the edge of your chair — get some back support.

Avoid gossiping about others and be friendly to everyone. Listen to soothing music without disturbing your colleagues. Take short breaks after continuous work — you should not do more than one hour of continuous work. Learn to say “No” if you have too much to do already. Try not to bring work home.

## 3. Do simple things that bring you pleasure.

- Sift through old photographs — memories of a fun occasion can trigger joyous emotions locked in your memory.
- Walk alongside trees in the Botanic Gardens. Get close to nature. This helps to soothe frazzled nerves.

- Dust off your phone book to touch base with old friends.
- Take a 20-minute power nap to recharge.
- As you step into your home after a long day at work, spend 10-15 minutes doing deep breathing exercises and reflecting on the day’s challenges.

## 4. Exercise.

### **Breathing exercises.**

These can be done with your eyes open or closed and in a sitting or lying-down position. Begin by placing your hand on your diaphragm and breathing in slowly and deeply. When exhaling, imagine that you are breathing out all your tension and troubles. Repeat until you feel calm and relaxed.

### **Imagery or visualisation.**

Start with the above breathing exercise but include visualisation. Imagine yourself walking in a forest or along a beach. Think about how you would feel and what you would see or hear, and focus on your breathing.

### **Muscle relaxation exercises.**

Start with the breathing exercises and focus on the major muscle groups from head to toe. Clench your jaw, hold it for a few seconds and then relax. Repeat this a few times. Next, tense up your mouth and then relax. After which, tilt your neck upwards and backwards, hold it and then relax. You can then lift your shoulders towards your neck. Next gradually take turns to tighten and relax your arms, chest, abdomen, thighs, calves and toes before ending with the breathing exercises again. Breathing and muscle exercises slow down the pace of breathing which regulates the heartbeat and relaxes the body. They also take the mind off stressful thoughts. 🦋



# Calendar of Events

(Apr – Nov 2010)

Events	Dates	Time	Venue
<b>Volunteer Movie Night: My Sister's Keeper</b> <i>by Dover Park Hospice</i>	1 Apr	7pm – 9.30pm	HCA Auditorium
<b>Advanced Qualitative Research</b> <i>by Dover Park Hospice</i>	2, 10, 17, 24 Apr	9am – 4pm	Dover Park Hospice Council Room, Level 2
<b>Cervical Cancer Awareness Campaign: Public Forum</b> <i>by Singapore Cancer Society</i>	8 May	To be confirmed (TBC)	Bishan Community Club (TBC)
<b>Cervical Cancer Awareness Campaign: Celebrate Wellness Road Show</b> <i>by Singapore Cancer Society</i>	15 May	1pm – 3pm	Queenstown Community Club (TBC)
<b>Basic Palliative Care Volunteer Training in Mandarin</b> <i>by Dover Park Hospice</i>	PART 1: 8 May PART 2: 15 May	9am – 4pm	Dover Park Hospice
<b>Advanced Palliative Care Training: Basic Nursing Care in Mandarin</b> <i>by Dover Park Hospice</i>	22 May	9am – 1pm	Dover Park Hospice
<b>Assisi Hospice Charity Fun Day</b> <i>by Assisi Hospice</i>	29 May	10am – 5pm	St Joseph's Institution International
<b>Volunteer Orientation Course in English (New Volunteers)</b> <i>by Dover Park Hospice</i>	12 Jun 9 Oct	9am – 1pm	Dover Park Hospice
<b>Basic Palliative Care Volunteer Training in English</b> <i>by Dover Park Hospice</i>	PART 1: 10 Jul and 13 Nov PART 2: 17 Jul and 20 Nov	9am – 4pm	Dover Park Hospice
<b>Advanced Palliative Care Training: Basic Nursing Care in English</b> <i>by Dover Park Hospice</i>	24 Jul 27 Nov	9am – 1pm	Dover Park Hospice



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