

Embargoed until 7pm, 12 October 2024

MEDIA RELEASE

Ren Ci Hospital's 30th Anniversary Celebrations Culminate with Charity Gala Dinner

Patients wish for more Emotional Support at end stage of life – Ren Ci's Study

Singapore, 12 October 2024 – In celebration of Ren Ci Hospital's 30th anniversary, we held our Charity Gala Dinner at The Shangri La Island Ballroom on 12 October 2024. We are privileged to have President Tharman Shanmugaratnam grace the occasion as our Guest of Honour.

2024 is a milestone year in Ren Ci's healthcare journey. Not only does it mark 30 years since the beginning of Ren Ci, we officially opened our third nursing home, Ren Ci @ Woodlands, in July this year. Over three decades, Ren Ci's bed capacity has grown over seven-fold, from 174 beds in 1994 to the current 1301 beds across four facilities.

The Charity Gala Dinner caps a series of events for the anniversary celebrations, ending the year on a high note as we raised more than \$8 million in support of patient care at Ren Ci. Held once every five years, the Charity Gala Dinner helps support many of Ren Ci's programmes that will benefit the needy beneficiaries.

Today, Ren Ci provides end-to-end care services after the acute setting. Ren Ci is the only organisation with the full suite of residential and non-residential services post-acute care.

Ren Ci's 2024 survey on palliative care

At the gala dinner, Mr Seow Choke Meng, Chairman, Ren Ci Hospital, shared the results of a recent survey done by Ren Ci.

Reaching out to close to 500 patients, residents, clients and their next-of-kin, the survey studied the key concerns respondents had at the end of life.

"We found that that only 65% of respondents felt they understood what palliative care is. And these are respondents who are already using some form of community care services, so they are not new to healthcare services," shared Mr Seow.

Among respondents, 90% wished for adequate control of physical symptoms, such as pain and shortness of breath. This is not unexpected.

More importantly, 91% felt they needed emotional support.

"Good palliative care is holistic, encompassing medical, psychological and spiritual support. Yet, less than one-third of those surveyed were aware that palliative care includes these components, focusing

only on the medical aspects of care,” added Mr Seow. “Many were also unaware that other therapists such as art therapists and music therapists, together with social workers and pastoral team members, play vital roles in helping persons at end-of-life express and process their emotions through stages such as denial, guilt, grief and finally acceptance as they come to terms with impending death.”

These findings have helped shape Ren Ci’s 5-year strategic plan to grow our palliative care services.

Today, Ren Ci already provides Inpatient Hospice and Palliative Care service (IHPCS), rehabilitation programmes with a palliative approach (ICARE – Integrated Care for Advanced Respiratory Disorders and CCARE – Cardiac Care and Recovery), in-home hospice as part of our Home Care services and other psychosocial programmes such as art therapy and music therapy. Ren Ci will be looking at expanding these services and developing new programmes so that more patients can benefit.

“We have about 100 patients with palliative care needs across our various care settings such as the Chronic Sick Unit, nursing homes and home care at any one time, a number that is expected to rise to 250 by 2027,” said Dr Jamie Mervyn Lim, CEO, Ren Ci Hospital. “By including strong components of psychosocial support, art therapy and music therapy in our service capabilities, we will provide a person-centred programme that support our seniors and their families through the last leg of life’s journey with comfort and dignity. Ren Ci will be looking at expanding these services and developing new programmes so that more patients can benefit. Early intervention is especially crucial in providing emotional support, to have sufficient time to discuss and understand the patient’s values, beliefs and care goals and work towards achieving them.”

Two seniors, Mr Francis and Mdm Koh, showcase the positive effects of the provision of holistic palliative care beyond the patient themselves, making a significant difference in the lives of those facing life-limiting illnesses and those around them. Patient profiles as well as an infographic of the survey results are available in the annex.

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Annex A – Palliative Patient Profiles

Mr Simon Francis

One of the beneficiaries of Ren Ci's focus on palliative care is Mr Simon Francis, who joined the ICARE programme, a rehabilitation programme with early palliative care approach for patients suffering from breathlessness due to advance chronic lung diseases.

His journey at Ren Ci demonstrates the transformative power of holistic care. While receiving medical treatment and rehabilitation, Mr Francis also engaged in art therapy to process the emotional turmoil following his wife's death, particularly feelings of loneliness, guilt and loss. Once independent and active, he now finds himself relying on others for support, which challenged his sense of identity. The therapy helped him rebuild his self-esteem and sense of purpose, while new friendships with fellow residents provided social support. By rebuilding his self-esteem and finding social connection, he experienced less emotional distress, which in turn improved his ability to manage his breathlessness.

Ren Ci also supported his desire for autonomy by allowing him to venture into the community. Recognising that Mr Francis had proven capable of caring for himself, these occasional outings where he exercises his independence allow him to maintain a sense of control and joy in his life, contributing to his overall well-being.

Mr Francis is available for media interviews.



Part of an artwork done by Mr Francis, documenting his life story. The successful completion of his artwork resulted in a sense of achievement for him, and our staff observed an increase in self-esteem.

Mdm Koh

Another resident who benefited from the provision of palliative care is Mdm Koh, who was a palliative care patient at Woodlands Health. She was transferred to Ren Ci @ Woodlands, where our nursing home care team worked hand in hand with the geriatricians and palliative physicians from Woodlands Health.

Together, our teams supported Mdm Koh and her daughter through the last few months of Mdm Koh's life by providing the needed medical, nursing, psychosocial and spiritual care to the both of them. Mdm Koh eventually passed away peacefully, with our team offering her bereavement support.

Today, her daughter continues to visit Ren Ci @ Woodlands as a volunteer to spend time with her mother's household mates, bringing them much joy and companionship.

Annex B – Infographic of Palliative Care Awareness Survey 2024



Ren Ci Palliative Care Awareness Survey 2024

With an ageing population, emphasis on ageing in place and focus on palliative care, what are the key concerns of Singaporeans at end of life? Ren Ci reached out to almost 500 patients, residents, clients and their next-of-kin to find out.

Top Concerns

91%

Receiving emotional support

90%

Adequate control of physical symptoms such as pain and shortness of breath



Wishes at End of Life

85%

of respondents

wanted loved ones by their bedside in the last few hours of life

75%

of respondents

agreed that top priorities in last few months of life included creating memories and celebrating special occasions with loved ones

Awareness



About 3 in 5 respondents had heard of palliative care and felt they understood what it is

< 1/3

Less than 1/3 of those surveyed were aware that therapists and pastoral team members are also involved in the provision of palliative care

Most respondents were unaware that therapists, social workers and pastoral team members work together to help persons at end-of-life express and process their emotions through stages such as denial, guilt, grief and finally acceptance as they come to terms with impending death

Key Takeaways



Good palliative care must be holistic, encompassing not just medical support but also psychological and spiritual support.



We should continue creating awareness to recognise the importance of the lesser-known multi-disciplinary team members such as therapists and pastoral team members



Early intervention is crucial in providing emotional support, to have sufficient time to discuss and understand the patient's values, beliefs and care goals and work towards achieving them

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About Ren Ci Hospital

Established since 1994, Ren Ci Hospital is one of the few charity healthcare institutions in Singapore to provide high quality and affordable medical, nursing and rehabilitative care services for the community, based on the principles of loving kindness and compassion. Ren Ci plays an integral role in supporting the healthcare needs of the elderly through adopting a holistic way of delivering person-centred care.

Today Ren Ci Hospital runs a community hospital, a chronic sick unit, three nursing homes, four Senior Care Centres and one Active Ageing Centre (Care). These facilities are spread throughout Singapore, at Ang Mo Kio, Bukit Batok, Novena and Woodlands.

Besides giving hope to the frail elderly by helping overcome their disabilities and teaching their families to care for them at home, Ren Ci also partners various community groups and social enterprises to give dignity back to the elderly.