



Mercy Health
Care first

Spring News 2009

MERCY PALLIATIVE CARE

ADVANCE CARE PLANNING

IN OUR DEMOCRATIC AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY, HAVING THE CAPACITY TO MAKE DECISIONS ABOUT OUR HEALTHCARE IS CONSIDERED A FUNDAMENTAL RIGHT.



PHOTO COURTESY DHS

This article focuses on the importance of **Advance Care Planning**, a recognised process that assists patients and their families to plan for and share their wishes for the end of life with family and significant others. While it is not always a topic a person wants to discuss, it is helpful to people in their journey in the health care setting.

Advance Care Planning is a process that does not occur at one meeting. It requires time to think and plan for what is important for an individual in the context of their current medical situation. **Advance Care Planning** includes decisions about the medical treatments wanted or not wanted, what to do if someone is unable to communicate or make medical decisions, were seriously ill, had an accident or were dying.

Advance Care Planning enables a patient's wishes and views to influence this discussion and decision. (Ref: *Respecting Patient Choices*, www.respectingpatientchoices.org.au retrieved 14 July 2009)

The opportunity for a patient and family members to meet with experts in any of the areas that add to an **Advance Care Plan** is important. These experts could include your local general practitioner or medical specialist to discuss health decisions, your legal representative in the case of making a will or determining powers of attorney and family members or significant persons to identify who could act as a "substitute" decision maker should one be required.

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PROVISION OF CARE STATISTICS [MAY / JUNE / JULY]

- > Population of catchment area: 695,642 (1,368 sq kms)
- > New referrals: 347
- > Number of deaths: 244
- > Number of face to face contacts with patients and their families: 7,147
- > Time involved with face to face contacts: 320,022 (5,333 hours)
- > Kilometres travelled by staff to visit patients and families: 36,157 kms (33 return trips to Mildura)
- > Family support volunteer hours: 550 hours

NEWSLETTER DONATIONS

WE WISH TO THANK EVERYONE WHO SENT DONATIONS IN RESPONSE TO OUR AUTUMN NEWSLETTER. WE RECEIVED \$14,689. AS ALWAYS, A BIG THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROUS DONATIONS.

Manager's Report

I OFTEN HEAR CONCERNS FROM PEERS ABOUT THE WAY IN WHICH DEATH AND DYING ARE DISCUSSED IN THE COMMUNITY AND PARTICULARLY IN THE HEALTH CARE SETTING.

In this current climate of independent decision making and advanced medical technology, it is important that we highlight the need for Advance Care Planning so that we receive care at the end of life in a way that is meaningful for us as individuals. To this end Mercy Palliative Care is embarking on a pilot project with La Trobe University to ensure that patients and their families have the opportunity to consider how they wish to be cared for and how to communicate this information to family members and their treating team. This project focuses on the way we document our conversations with patients and their families regarding advance care plans and will become a regular part of our practice in line with national recommendations. We hope this project will also assist in reducing the barriers in our community when talking about death and dying.

Recently, I was asked to speak to a group of senior secondary students in our catchment area. The topic was *How we make decisions about future personal health care and those of the ones we care for*. This opportunity helped raise the profile of death and dying among young people who would not usually contemplate anything in this realm of the life cycle. Most of these young people indicated they had attended a funeral as a young person and had clear memories of the experience and spoke about what was important to them now, should they need to discuss or prepare for such an event themselves. While the topic was for many students unsavoury, I am very aware that they went home and spoke to their families about the session. This is key to the new health-promoting palliative care model that aims to remove the stigma of death and dying as unacceptable conversation topics in the general community. I hope the content of this newsletter raises opportunities in your life to talk about and write down the wishes you have for your future health care and decision making.



CAROL QUAYLE, MANAGER,
PALLIATIVE CARE SERVICES

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Carol".

ADVANCE CARE PLANNING *Continued from page 1*

By documenting this information ahead of time, there is less burden placed on others to make decisions if a health crisis occurs. Family members may also be more confident to talk about your wishes if there has been open discussion prior to the event.

Advance Care Planning encourages people to:

- > Consider the kind of care that is in keeping with their values and their wishes about their own life and death
- > Talk to their health care providers about their concerns about the dying process, to seek information to help them make decisions about their future care and to review possible scenarios related to their own situation

- > Talk to their families and/or friends about these matters
- > Identify a proxy decision-maker
- > Address other matters to do with their death, such as organ donation, wills and funerals

Advance care planning is based on the ethical and legal principle of autonomy – that violating patients' autonomy by disregarding their wishes may constitute a legal offence. (Ref: *Caresearch* retrieved www.caresearch.com.au/Caresearch/Default.aspx retrieved 14 July 2009)

Useful resources include:

The Office of the Public Advocate

www.publicadvocate.vic.gov.au/About-us/The-Public-Advocate.html

Respecting Patient Choices

www.respectingpatientchoices.org.au

Caresearch

www.caresearch.com.au/Caresearch/Default.aspx

The State Trustees of Victoria

www.statetrustees.com.au/

Palliative Care Victoria

www.pallcarevic.asn.au/general-public

Palliative Care Australia

www.palliativecare.org.au

THANK YOU GIFTS

Donations in the form of bequests, memorial gifts and thank you gifts from the community and grateful families enable Mercy Palliative Care to provide additional services and equipment to improve the lives of those we serve. Some families have chosen to make a memorial gift by supporting a scholarship to help train more staff or to provide counselling for those in need.

All gifts are greatly received, acknowledged and every donor is thanked.

To discuss your thank you gift please phone Carol Quayle on **9364 9777**.



THE COMMUNITY HELPING US

Over recent months we have been conducting the annual Parish Appeal. This involves coordinating with local parishes in our catchment area to provide a speaker from Mercy Palliative Care to attend church services to speak about the work of Mercy Palliative Care. This year we are very honoured to announce the final total raised is **\$64,714.60**. We deeply appreciate the staff and volunteers who gave up their time to speak on behalf of Mercy Palliative Care and, of course, to all the leaders and congregation of each parish for digging deep to assist us with this fund raising effort.

Sincere thanks go to Maria Pantzikis, a longstanding member of staff at Mercy Palliative Care, for coordinating everything in conjunction with volunteers Yvette Oswald and Anne O'Brien. Well done!

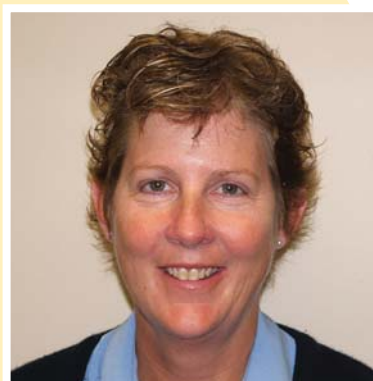
ANNE O'BRIEN, MARIA PANTZIKIS, YVETTE OSWALD



Thank you

To everyone who has supported our winter CD drive. We have received a wonderful selection of music covering many different styles and eras including Neil Diamond, The Goons, Juke Box Jive, classical music for relaxation and Irish folk songs. These CDs are now being put to good use in our Music Therapy Program, and are available for loan by patients, families and staff.

WHO'S WHO AT MERCY



Name

Robyn Tucker

Position

Registered Nurse Div 1

Best part of the job

Being part of a great team and trying to make a difference to those people affected by terminal illness. It is a privilege to be a small cog in a big wheel of one of the biggest challenges in the lives of patients and their families.

'Fave' restaurant

Gisborne Thai Hut

'Fave' footy team

Unfortunately Melbourne!

Last Book

The Road of Lost Innocence by Somaly Mam – makes me feel very fortunate!

Biggest adventure

Raising my beautiful children. Also, sitting in an open Jeep whilst over 100 elephants marched past on either side. It was truly magnificent but somewhat terrifying.

ALL DONATIONS OVER \$2 ARE TAX DEDUCTIBLE

Notice Board

MERCY PALLIATIVE CARE MEMORIAL SERVICE

The Christmas Memorial Service will be held on Monday 7 December at 7pm. If you would like to attend, please call the office on **(03) 9364 9777**.

BEREAVEMENT INFORMATION SESSIONS

Thursday 12 November, Thursday 19 November, Thursday 26 November.
(Two sessions each date) 10am–12.30pm or 6.30pm–9pm.
Please call the office on **9364 9777** if you would like to attend one of the sessions.

MERCY & WESTERN DAY HOSPICE

The Day Hospice is a joint initiative between Western Health and Mercy Palliative Care held at the Sunshine Hospital. The aim of Day Hospice is to promote wellbeing, independence and enjoyment for clients whilst providing a day off for carers.

Open Tuesday and Thursdays from 9am–3pm, the hospice provides activities, morning and afternoon tea and lunch for a gold coin donation. **Enquiries 8345 1226**.

PROGRAMS FOR CARERS

Carers Victoria, located in Footscray, has a huge range of education options and programs for carers. You can visit their website carersvic.org.au or call them on **1800 242 636**.

SUPPORT IN BEREAVEMENT

Creative Memories Group occurs on the **first Thursday of each month** from **1.30pm–3pm** at the Sunshine office, 3 Devonshire Road, Sunshine. For more information and to book a space at the table please call us on **9364 9777**.

In collaboration with Mercy Palliative Care, the Australian Centre for Grief and Bereavement provides regular monthly groups for local families at the Sunshine Office. **Kids Grieve Too West** is held on the **third Monday of the month**. For further information about this group please contact the Australian Centre for Grief and Bereavement on **9265 2111**.

MERCY PALLIATIVE CARE

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WE REMEMBER

We are indebted to the wonderful support from family and friends in memory of their loved one. Since our last newsletter, funeral donations have been received in memory of:

Michela Arena
Heather Barsby
Siro Battistella
Alan Becroft
Caterina Caruana
Rina Chilcott
Dorothy Johnson
Gloria Jordan
Joseph Juskevicius
Colin King
Domenica Mesiti
Margaret Moffatt
Timoleon Paralís
Kenneth Parkin
Barbara Shay
Phoebe J Thompson
Hans Tiedemann
Elfriede Zaharopoulos

LOAN EQUIPMENT

Do you have loan equipment from Mercy Palliative Care which is no longer needed? Please give us a call on **1300 369 019** and we will organise for it to be picked up. The equipment will be easily recognised as it will have a white Mercy Hospice sticker on it.

AREAS OF SERVICE

- City of Brimbank
- City of Hobson's Bay
- City of Maribyrnong
- City of Melbourne
- City of Moonee Valley
- City of Wyndham
- Shire of Melton

PRIVACY POLICY: Under the new privacy laws, it is vitally important that we protect your privacy to ensure that your rights are fully protected. Currently we hold personal information about donors, such as names, addresses and anonymous information relating to donation history. We supply a taxation receipt for every donation of \$2 or more, provided we have your name and address details. We do not and will not disclose any information about you to any other person or organisation. This information is securely held and can only be accessed by authorised personnel under the terms of the new legislation. Should you choose to receive no further information from us you can simply write to the address provided above.