

⁶⁶ Palliative care at Assisi Hospice is guided strongly by the principle of living one's life the way you want to for as long as possible. Our knowledge, skills, attitudes and values enable us to recognise and respond to the needs of individuals, families and communities in challenging and changing situations, they find themselves in. We seek to ensure individuals are at the centre of our care. ⁹⁹

We Are Fully Open!

With the opening of St Clare ward on 15 May this year, all the six wards in our building are fully open since we moved to our current premises in January 2017. Our care team of nurses, doctors, medical social workers, allied health and pastoral care professionals, as well as our donors and supporters, gathered for a blessing ceremony to mark the occasion.



We have a total of 85 beds in mainly single rooms, with some double and quad rooms. Together with our growing Home Care service, where we currently manage more than 350 patients at any one time, we will continue to do better in meeting our patients' needs to be cared for in a way that is most suited to their medical needs and personal preference.



Harnessing Technology to Improve Care for Patients

A hot shower, a leisurely stroll outdoors and exercising are some activities we do every day, yet these simple pleasures may not come easy for some of our patients. However, with funding support from Ministry of Health, we have procured well-designed equipment that support our nursing staff and therapists in their quest to provide greater comfort and care for our patients.

Showering comfortably with the Carendo

For patients who are unable to sit well, the process of showering and other hygiene routines are tedious and physically demanding for them and their caregivers. A new addition to Assisi Hospice this year, the Carendo is a multipurpose hygiene chair with a reclined position which makes showering more comfortable for patients. The Carendo also improves efficiency and makes it easier for our nurses, as it enables a single caregiver to perform the entire showering procedure and other daily hygiene tasks. Supporting our staff better also means supporting our patients better!



Transport-ready customised wheelchair for our young patients

In support of our first dedicated ward in Singapore to provide paediatric palliative care, we have equipped ourselves with a customised wheelchair. This enables children under our care to enjoy the outdoors in comfort. The wheelchair can tilt in space and be customised with a range of separate specially designed cushions, providing adequate support for patients with poor balance and muscle control. The wheelchair is also transport-ready and can fit into a van, enabling our young patients to go on outings in comfort.

Maintaining muscle strength with the MOTomed

Regular cycling machines are often too challenging for patients with weak muscles as they are unable to sustain the cycling motion. The MOTomed therapy device, an addition to Assisi Hospice this year, has a motor-assisted movement therapy function which allows patients to benefit from exercise even when they are unable to independently keep up with the cycling action. Regular MOTomed training can strengthen the muscles and build fitness. Both our inpatients and day care patients can train at the MOTomed movement therapy device from their chairs or wheelchairs.



Patient Katherine Yue Shares Her Gift of Singing



Our patient, Ms Katherine Yue, 52, shared her gift of singing by holding not one – but three private concerts for family, friends, patients and staff of Assisi Hospice in May and July this year. Accompanied by our senior music therapist, Ms Tammy Lim, who played either the guitar or keyboard, Katherine sang a repertoire of English and Chinese oldies and gospel music.

A former nurse, Ms Yue was often crowned champion at singing contests held at her workplace. She loves to sing and has crooned at her loved ones' birthday celebrations and at parties.

"Tammy encouraged me to share my gift of singing. Singing makes me feel very joyful and happy. Being able to still sing makes me feel like I'm still useful, as I can bring joy to others." Ms Yue said. Ms Yue was diagnosed with ovarian cancer seven years ago. The cancer cells have spread and she was warded as an inpatient in Assisi Hospice in April this year. Tammy said, "Katherine always talks about living life to the fullest and she refuses to be depressed. She looks forward to what she can still do and this attitude is very inspiring to our staff here."

For Ms Yue, she said that being diagnosed with a life-limiting illness meant that she had to learn to "humble" herself to accept care from others, a role reversal given that she spent more than 30 years as a nurse caring for patients. Regarding her performances, she said, "I'm now living on borrowed time and at least I'm able to give something before I leave."

Assisi Volunteers – Giving to Meet Patients' Needs

Serving meals, feeding patients, making sweet soups, singing and playing the ukulele are just some of many contributions that Louisa Ng, 63, makes as a volunteer at Assisi Hospice. She explained, "What I do depends on the need of the patient. Sometimes, when the patient is feeling moody, all I do is just sit next to her and hold her hand."

Louisa started volunteering with Assisi Hospice 6 years ago, after retiring as a Maths and Science teacher in a secondary school. She started volunteering at Assisi Hospice's Day Care Centre, where she served breakfast, lunch and tea and helped to feed patients. As she loves cooking, she also made desserts like green bean soup and barley and ginkgo nut soup to add variety to the patients' tea menu. When she realised that music brought cheer to some of the patients, she started playing the guitar and ukulele and singing with them; these were skills that she picked up as a teenager. Some patients were so interested in the instruments that she taught them how to play.

Besides using the gifts that she already had, Louisa is also eager to pick up new skills, as long as it helps the patients. "My Mandarin and dialect are not good, but I have learned to play and sing 'The Moon Represents My Heart (月亮代表我的心)' because many patients love this song. The patients also taught me how to play mahjong," she laughed.

Last year, she started to volunteer at Assisi Hospice's dementia palliative care ward as well. Having received training on patient care, including tasks like handling of wheelchairs, transferring patients from bed to wheelchair, she is now able to help the nurses with changing and bathing the patients. When she recalled and spoke about patients who had passed on and left a deep impression on her, her eyes were slightly moist. But the natural sadness that comes with the passing of someone dear to us, does not stop her from continuing to give back and serve. She said, "I believe they are now in a better place. I learned a lot from them. I admire their courage and cheerfulness about life, even when death is nearby."



It is very encouraging to the team that volunteers like Louisa share in our understanding that the final journey is a time for joy, making new memories and forming new friendships. Growth occurs over our entire lifetime; families, friends and the community around our patients continue to grow together in the final journey.

We want you!

Do you have a few hours to spare and a heart to serve? Make a lasting impact on the lives of our patients by volunteering with us! Visit our website at <http://www.assisihospice.org.sg/individual-volunteer/> for more details and to sign up.