

➤ Hospice Palliative Care

a growing issue across Canada

ARTICLE IN THE SW BOOSTER, FEBRUARY 7, 2013

BY SCOTT ANDERSON, EDITOR

Ensuring the proper hospice palliative care resources and services are available when they are needed is a constant challenge to those working in the palliative care field. However, palliative care is the key tool in providing comfort and dignity to families dealing with advanced illnesses or are bereaved.

Hospice palliative care refers to any kind of care that focuses on the needs of health care for individuals and families who are living with a life-limiting illness that is usually at an advanced state. The goal of palliative care is to provide comfort and dignity for the person living with the illness, as well as the best quality of life for both this person and his or her family, including relatives, partners and friends.

Palliative care meets not only physical needs through the relief of pain and other symptoms, but also psychological, social, cultural, emotional and spiritual needs of each

person and family. Palliative care may be the main focus of care when a cure for the illness is no longer possible, allowing people who are ill to live out their remaining time in comfort and dignity.

Statistically, only 16 to 30 per cent of Canadians who die currently have access to or receive hospice palliative or end-of-life care services.

The Canadian Hospice Palliative Care Association also points out that the 2005 Senate report *Still Not There: Quality End-of-Life Care: A Progress Report*, highlighted a number of advancements since 2000, but there remained significant disparities across Canada with respect to access to palliative and end-of-life care.

With an aging population in Canada, the Canadian Hospice Palliative Care Association estimates that over the next four decades the demand for hospice palliative care services will continue to increase.

Public awareness programs are critically important in helping Canadians face end-of-life issues and in addressing current gaps in service. The Saskatchewan Hospice Palliative Care Association is planning a series of awareness articles in the Southwest Booster this year in a lead up to their first Sunset Gala on September 21 at the Living Sky Casino's Sky Centre. Their aim is to raise awareness of the increasing demand for hospice palliative care, particularly in rural and remote regions, and to augment and facilitate the strategies and programs that are in place to focus on this need.

The Association exists to promote the philosophy and the principles of Palliative care through networking, education, advocacy and research. The SHPCA is committed to education and public awareness of the need of the terminally ill, thus enabling and empowering communities to recognize the val-

ues, needs and wishes of persons in all seasons of life. The Association's goals address the issues of quality of life, comfort, dignity and hope.

In March of 2012, the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology made several recommendations, including one that would see federal, provincial, and territorial governments develop and implement a strategy for continuing care in Canada that would integrate home and facility based long-term, respite and palliative-care services fully within health care systems.

Funding continues to be one of the most pressing issues, with hospice palliative care programs about 50 per cent funded by charitable donations. Families must often bear part of the cost of dying at home, in long-term care and anywhere that is not a hospital.

Research is another area in which there is an acute need to de-

velop more effective pain and symptom management, including psychosocial aspects of hospice palliative care and effective methods of delivering hospice palliative care services and programs within the health care system.

Training and education of volunteers, physicians, nurses, social workers, psychologists and spiritual counselors will become even more important in a system-wide approach to hospice palliative and end-of-life care.

The CHPCA estimates that each death in Canada affects the immediate well being of an average of five other people, or more than 1.25 million Canadians each year. Hospice palliative care programs allow patients to gain more control over their lives, manage pain and symptoms more effectively, and provides support to family caregivers.

More information is available at www.saskpalliativecare.org.