

## PALLIATIVE CARE ADVOCACY IN MALAYSIA



Even to this day, many are not aware of palliative care services. It has been more than 50 years since Dr. Dame Cicely Mary Saunders founded the hospice care movement. Before that patients with progressive non-curable diseases were just left to die without any care. When the medical fraternity felt it was inhumane to neglect patients towards the end of life, they were kept in various hospital wards. The end of life care then was very poor as these patients were given the least priority. This led to the setting up of hospices where these patients were allowed to die pain free and with dignity. This end of life care further improved to present day palliative care which is a new field in medicine for patients and families facing life-threatening illnesses. They are given treatment to control physical symptoms and address emotional and psycho-social issues. Palliative care is generally provided by a team of specialists, which may include physicians, nurses, social workers, religious workers, physiotherapists,

pharmacists, and nutritionists. PPCS has added Palliative Massage Therapy to further complement its services.

Acknowledging the importance of palliative care, the Ministry of Health has introduced palliative care in hospitals. There are about 25 non-governmental organizations providing Hospice / Palliative Care services in Malaysia. Looking at world statistics, only 8% of chronic life threatening illnesses had access to palliative care because of various reasons including lack of palliative care policies at national level, lack of trained personnel, lack of funding and reduced access to medication.

Hospice Malaysia took the initiative to spearhead Palliative Care Advocacy with a Palliative Care symbol launched by the Honorable Minister of Health at an elaborate function at Publika in Damansara, Kuala Lumpur on 25 April 2014. PPCS was represented by four members to this function which was attended by VIPs, international invitees, donors of Hospice Malaysia, several local celebrities who endorsed palliative care and some patients who gave testimony regarding palliative care. There was a photo exhibition, a video show, a dedicated website for resources at [www.palliativecare.my](http://www.palliativecare.my), celebrity endorsements and a signature wall.



**ROYAL PATRON:**

Duli Yang Teramat Mulia Raja Muda Perak Darul Ridzuan, Raja Dr Nazrin Shah Ibni Sultan Azlan Muhibuddin Shah  
DK, DK II (Selangor), DKSA, SPCM, SPTS, SPMP (Perlis), PhD (Harvard)

**HONORARY ADVISOR:** Dr Rosalie Shaw PSM, MBBS Hons (Monash), FRACMA, FACHPM, BA (Melbourne), BEd (Melbourne), RN, RM

# Malaysian Cochrane Network Launch

Perak Palliative Care Society is the only NGO in Malaysia represented by Dr Suzanne Koven



Joan Chee

On May 28, 2014 at the Park Royal Hotel, Kuala Lumpur, the Malaysian Cochrane Network was launched. What is Cochrane? Cochrane is a global independent network of health practitioners, researchers, patient advocates and others, dedicated to working together to produce credible and accessible health information in the form of Cochrane Reviews. A Cochrane Review aims to analyse all available data on questions about health care, and to give a clear picture of what the scientific evidence shows both in terms of whether a treatment is effective (or harmful), and how the benefits and harms weigh up against each other. Ensuring that health decision makers, health professionals and the general public has access to up-to-date, relevant evidence research will help to raise awareness of the effectiveness of treatments and medications and therefore improve health care. Their vision is a world of improved health where decisions about health and health care are informed by high-quality, relevant and up-to-date synthesized research evidence with a mission to promote evidence-informed health decision-making by producing high-quality, relevant, accessible systematic reviews and other synthesized research evidence. The Launch demonstrates Cochrane's and the Ministry of Health's determination to be leading advocates for evidence-informed health care in Malaysia. Professor Jacqueline Ho from Penang Medical College is the convenor for the Malaysian Cochrane Network.

Cochrane made itself present in Malaysia in 2004, but it has taken 10 years for it to grow and develop into a recognized body for evidence based medicine in Malaysia. It is supported by the Ministry of Health, Penang Medical College, University of Malaya, Manipal University, and Universiti Sains Malaysia. As of May, 2014, there are more than 220 clinicians and researchers in Malaysia who have produced 70 Cochrane Reviews to the huge body of medical evidenced based literature in the Cochrane Library ([www.cochrane.org](http://www.cochrane.org)). This number is growing.

What is exciting is that PPCS was highlighted at the launch because we are the only NGO in Malaysia that has contributing authors. PPCS is committed to incorporate evidence based practice into the care they provide. Being invited and the only NGO represented at the launch are proof to this commitment. Currently, PPCS's Hon. Advanced Oncology Certified Nurse, Joan Chee and Medical Director/CEO, Dato' Dr. Ziaudin Ahamed Bin Abdul Kareem along with Consultant Palliative Care Physician from the Ministry of Health, Dr. Yeat Choi Ling and Dr. Margaret Barton-Burke, Professor of Nursing at the College of Nursing at the University of St. Louis, St. Louis, MO, USA, are co-authoring a protocol to determine the best non-pharmacological interventions for sleep-wake disturbances for persons with cancer. It is projected to be published in the Cochrane Library by the end of the year.

**Submitted by: JOAN CHEE, MS, RN, AOCN® (USA),  
Hon Advanced Oncology Certified Nurse**

Where the Authors are from	No. of Authors
Institute for Medical Research, MOH	24
Other Ministry of Health Institutes and Divisions	17
Ministry of Health Hospitals and Health Depts	15
University of Malaya	32
Universiti Sains Malaysia	24
Melaka Manipal Medical College	23
International Medical University	15
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia	13
Universiti Putra Malaysia	12
Penang Medical College	6
Private Hospitals	6
<b>NGOs (Perak Palliative Care Society)</b>	<b>2</b>
9 Other academic institutions and unknown	16
Unknown	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>213</b>



Left group pix: National and International VIPs present at the Malaysian Cochrane Network Launch.



Right group pix: (L-R) Prof. Amir Khir, Dean and President of Penang Medical College; Prof. Jacqueline Ho, MD, Convenor of the Malaysian Cochrane Network; **Joan Chee, Hon. Advanced Oncology Certified Nurse, PPCS**; Sharifah Janifer, MD. M. Med O&G (UKM) KPJ Ipoh Specialist Hospital



# Through Each Other's Eyes

## A journey to Boston, Caring for Cancer Clients with Oncology Massage

By Chandrika P. Choo, Complementary Therapist

A case of serendipity? Is it chance, fate, destiny, karma, luck, fortune or coincidence? What a wonderful way to describe my debut into palliative care and journey these past 3 years. Losing the love of my life to cancer paved an unlimited path for me to render my service in caring for clients with cancer through Oncology Massage. At Perak Palliative Care Society, we call it Palliative Massage, a therapy that addresses body and mind reciprocation through therapeutic touch.

There used to be a time when massage was deemed to be contraindicated in people with cancer. This contraindication persisted for decades until research, studies and data collection proved that massage when delivered by skilled therapists was safe to be administered. My thirst to excel further in the area of Palliative Massage led me to Boston to be further trained in this area. I am eternally indebted to PPCS for sponsoring me this educational opportunity and I am honoured to be taught by



the nationally recognised educator for Oncology Massage, Ms Tracy Walton.

Palliative Massage Therapy is a pilot project and PPCS is the first to incorporate this service in its home care programme. I have been working in isolation where

cancer massage was concerned. My CE's basically were dependent on learning via internet and connecting with Oncology Massage Therapists online for advice. I have had the privilege of befriending many great therapists who have been ever willing to assist me in areas of need. Nevertheless, greater was the reality when I actually met a whole lot of wonderful Oncology Massage Therapists and facilitators when I went to Boston.

My journey led me to meet my host Judy Dyer, a Nurse Practitioner with whom I spent many learning moments throughout my stay with regards to palliative care. Besides the course that I attended with Tracy Walton & Associates at the Elizabeth Grady School of Aesthetics and Massage Therapy, Boston, I also had the chance for shadow/attachment opportunities with Karen Ingwersen, Erika Slocum, Cortiva Institute, Boston Medical Centre & Massachusetts General Hospital. I also met with many great therapists who, besides being Oncology Massage Therapists, were also experts in Lymphedema and Paediatric Massage.

I was awed by the use of massage in cancer care by the major hospitals in Boston and the way they integrated touch in the various stages of caring for clients with cancer.

Another unforgettable learning experience was attending The Anatomical Exhibition of real human bodies which featured actual human bodies. It was almost like going through a crash course in Anatomy & Physiology.

It is my hope and dream that massage be integrated into palliative care to relieve common problems faced by oncology patients including emotional and physical pain, anxiety, insomnia, depression, stress, chemotherapy related nausea and fatigue. Oncology Massage is Medical Massage and it makes a holistic difference in patients as it addresses the physiological and psychological needs of patients in their various cancer stages. Greater awareness is needed together with a formal educational program to establish a career pathway in Oncology/Palliative Massage Therapy.



We thank all our donors for their generosity. As PPCS is a non-governmental agency, it relies substantially on the financial support of the general public. If as a reader of this newsletter, you wish to donate something to the Society, or you know of anyone who might be interested in doing so, please direct your personal donation or inform them to contact the Honorary Treasurer at:

PPCS, 54 Jalan Sultan Azlan Shah, 31400 Ipoh, Perak.

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(\*imo = in memory of)

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