

I joined the Perak Palliative Care Society (PPCS) as a volunteer only a few months ago, barely a blip compared to others who've been with the PPCS family for years; yet I've felt nothing but welcomed by everyone – a group of people bonded by the same desire to help others.

Joys of administrative work aside, I've visited the Batu Gajah palliative care unit along with a small but earnest group of volunteers. The ward was relatively small with a total of ten rooms, all clean and tidy. The senior volunteers treated the patients like old friends, and I followed their lead, asking about their day and providing support where we could.

It takes a different, quiet sort of strength to make these trips, something I wasn't sure I possessed; but I liked being able to make them smile and know that I might have made their day a little better, and the nurses' jobs a little bit easier. We pushed the patients on wheelchairs out for short walks in the sun, and did short, physical activities with them. These activities serve as a valuable reminder to me of the principle tenet of palliative care: improving quality of life, not just with medicine but in more personal, human ways.

I've also visited the Sungai Siput General Hospital to raise awareness of PPCS and its services. We set up stall near the hospital's main entrance, where most people instantly avoided us, giving furtive, half-interested glances as they passed. I was slightly surprised by how many people had never heard of PPCS or the field of palliative care. This field is relatively young compared to other fields of medical science, but definitely no less important. I was once told it is the other side of medicine that people think about less

Volunteering at PPCS

often – one that focuses more on relieving pain and improving quality of life, as opposed to curative treatment.

Raising awareness of our service, especially in smaller towns and districts, is vital because palliative care

is something anyone may need. Terminal illnesses can strike anyone, regardless of age, race, religion, or any other discriminator, and people might not always have the capability or knowledge they need to take care of their loved ones. But everyone deserves access to it.

The recent trip to the Roots Eco Resort, a combined outing for PPCS volunteers, staff and patients was a special experience in itself. I was given the chance to talk to the nurses about their work, and why they do what they do. I have great respect for them, and that didn't change after I had the chance to talk to them about their experiences with PPCS. I interacted with the patients, each with their own singular experiences and inner strength, some with more apparent liveliness and spark than the volunteers and nurses combined. I watched people laughing, dancing and having fun together. The usual barriers between patients and staff were non-existent; nurses and volunteers chatted with patients like they were old friends, and everyone seemed like they were on a field trip. It was a great morning that I'm happy I had the opportunity to be a part of.

For as much as I gave of my time for this cause, I felt like I gained back twice as much in knowledge and personal experience, and I look forward to continuing to grow alongside PPCS in the future.

*Miss Jacelyn Hee
Volunteer*

It was a day of beautiful people in beautiful surroundings. A day in our lives together do make a difference.

On the morning of 19th July, 2017, the Centre was abuzzed with excitement and excited client-patients congregating for the road trip! Volunteers, client-patients and members of staff spending time together at the Roots Eco Resort.

Back To Nature @ The Roots Eco Resort

Continued on page 2

There was the mandatory pre-outing briefing for all volunteers and clients. Reminders that we are to look out for one another as friends embarking on a journey and to alert nurses or volunteers should there be

any mishap were greeted with a resounding 'YES' from the group. Yeah, this group is good to go...

A luxury coach brought us to the resort. Thoughtful volunteers gave each participant pre-packed

Back To Nature @ The Roots Eco Resort

From page 1

snack-bags as each person boarded the coach. During the 30 min coach ride, there was much anticipation amongst volunteers, client-patients and staff in their exchanges and laughter. This group was indeed determined to enjoy the day with each other!

Upon arrival at the Roots, Ms Meena Bala bade us a warm welcome. She wasted no time to let us know that the whole premises was open to our group, and that we were to enjoy ourselves while she busied herself in the kitchen to prep our lunch.

In the natural surroundings, our nurses wasted no time in getting up close and personal with client-patients in a social setting. Light conversation, mutual teasing, giggles and roaring laughter were heard throughout the resort. Ms Lee Meng Choo took on the challenge posed by her friends to render a solo Chinese song act to the delight of everyone. After that, most of us joined in song and dance! Some preferred a quiet walk to enjoy the natural surroundings while others gathered under a gazebo for chit-chat, exchanging stories and updates. It was indeed a free and easy day for all!

Last but not least, we express our grateful thanks to Eco Roots Resort's Ms Meena Bala for the concessioned fee to the premises and generous sponsors for the luxury coach that ferried us to and from the resort. On this note, a special word of thanks to our ever efficient administrator, Ms Leong LaiPeng, who did a lot of prepping work for the trip but could not join us for the outing as she had to keep the office open for that day!



Getting up close and personal with our Kinta River.



Volunteers and Mrs Wendy Teoh enjoying a quiet chat.



The Happy Gang: some of our clients striking an energetic pose for the camera.



Together. All the way!

Below are some of the feedback from clients, volunteers, and staff:-

"During the Sunshine Hour in June, we were told that we would go to the Roots Resort in Tanjung Rambutan. We were looking forward to it. Finally the time arrived and we were going in the bus. It was a beautiful morning with the sun shining brightly. We had a wonderful time getting to know each other better. Some were learning dancing and singing. Time flew by and before we realised we had to go back after lunch. It was a day to remember forever."

(Mrs Wendy Teoh)

"I enjoyed with my friends so much! Hope PPCS will organise more day trips like these! So fast have to go back already!"

(Ms Ng Fee Chen)

"We don't get to meet up with these friends much. We treasure our time with one another. May be next time we can plan a trip to go away for a longer period!"

(Ms Tai Wai Kuan)

"Next outing, we must bring music to sing and dance with! Much more fun! Enjoyed our time together so much! Thank you, PPCS!"

(Ms Lee Meng Choo)

"I enjoyed myself very much. We may be people who are 'ill' but we are not 'sick' people! I feel PPCS really cares for us as they also included nurses in this outing. I am so glad."

(Ms Jennie Leong)

"It is most heartening to see our client-patients enjoying themselves immensely. Hope that we can do another outing soon!"

(PC Nurse SM Wong)

"They were exuberant with joy, singing and dancing without a care in the world. Would have been better if we had some music.... Syabas! Let's do it again! A big 'thank-you' to all volunteers for making this possible. It means a lot to our clients; they have such a special place in our hearts."

(PC Nurse Nancy Koh)



PCN Wong giving some pointers to our fun loving clients.



Palliative Care Workshop @ Hospis Malaysia

SUFFERING AND HOPE

How do healthcare and professionals deal with issues of grief and suffering and, in situations where hope or cure may be unrealistic or possible?

A three-day workshop was held at Hospis Malaysia over the weekend to discuss the above. The workshop facilitators need no introduction as both Ms Liese Groot-Alberts and Dr Sue Marsden are well-sought after international speakers on the issues of suffering, hope, trauma and grief in the context of palliative care. The aim of the workshop was to get an overall understanding of grief and the needs and responsibilities of healthcare professionals in connecting with patient and family transitioning from this life. Within the grief journey, both facilitators gave definitions of suffering, hope, trauma and grief, and the role healthcare professionals may undertake with patients and their family members to transform grief into a journey of healing and hope.

Suffering is inevitable in life but in every human being is given a measure of resilience to withstand suffering. Equally important is the fact that no one can eliminate suffering (of oneself or others) but we can support those who are suffering with our willingness to be connected, be aware, and to help. On the other hand, hope is a form of human resilience to weather and

endure suffering.

“Hope is the multidimensional dynamic life force characterised by a confident yet uncertain expectation of achieving a future good, which, to the hoping person, is realistically possible and personally significant.” (Dufault & Matocchio, 1985)

Relying heavily on Elisabeth Kubler-Ross’ Four Quadrants in which she theorised the complete make up of a human being, namely: spiritual, physical, intelligence, and emotional, Ms Liese and Dr Marsden explained that a human being’s experience or engagement with the world entails all four quadrants. Any quadrant dissociated from the others may be caused by overwhelming losses and/or the lack of acknowledgement of such losses. This reiterates the importance of our holistic health before we can render care and support to patients and their family members.

Throughout the three days, I gleaned many precious lessons, amongst them being:-

- It is crucial that a healthcare (spiritual and physical) professional be constantly aware and be connected with him/herself;
- Sort out our own ‘unfinished business’, grief, and/or trauma so as not to project our prejudices or perspectives on team members or client-patients;
- Suffering cannot be totally

eliminated, but we can help to alleviate, to a degree, the effects of suffering, for example, pain;

- There is no model or formula to deal with death. However, a willingness to be connected, and be present in the moment does help;
- Hope is the bridge connecting experiences of the past with the present. Hope creates the possibility for the person to take the next step forward;
- ‘Listen, Listen, Listen’ – in order to understand, not merely to reply;
- Learning to accept that not all losses can be gotten over. We ought to learn to live well whilst bearing them in our hearts. “There are some things you don’t get over, many things you learn to live with and you find a place in your heart and soul for them.” (Ms Liese).

Overall, the workshop was extremely helpful, beneficial not only from hands-on knowledge gained from facilitators but also from interaction and exchanges with colleagues and peers from the healthcare fraternity. I wish to express my grateful thanks to the Committee of PPCS that made it possible for me to attend this event.

*Cheong Sau Yen (Ms)
Volunteer Coordinator*

DONATIONS received during July – September 2017

JULY	RM
Michael	70
Loo Chit Chin @ Lu Tek Keon	200
Phun Chee Hon	200
Victor Lee Kok Hee	1,000
Soo Lai Leng & Lilian	80
Imo Ng Yoke Kwai	100
Imo Yee Saw Sen; Oh Saw Heoh; Tham Wing Hong	150
Wong Pooi Shan imo Foo Siew Mee	100
Imo Ahmad Ibrahim	100
Imo Wong Tam Sooi	1,000
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The late Mr Chau Ah Ngau	500
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Lee Su See	200
Fong Khar Yee	100

(*imo = in memory of)



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