

## COMMUNITY CARE

# EASING THE FINAL PARTING

All humanity faces the same end; not all face it with the same compassionate support. The Li Ka Shing Foundation is taking steps to dignify and ease the passing of those suffering in Hong Kong, and is doing so through concepts and services it has successfully introduced in Mainland China.

**D**onations have seen hospice centres built in 10 public hospitals in Hong Kong, with more than 100 healthcare professionals and 2,700 volunteers providing holistic services to terminal cancer patients. Medical consultations, bereavement counselling for patient families, home visits and volunteering services in hospice care are all provided. Total donations to the programme in Hong Kong so far amount to HKD120 million. The Li Ka Shing Foundation (LKSF) is helping families when they need it most.

“Dignity in death is priceless. Care and respect for those with a terminal illness are key indicators of our social values and the mark of any civilised society,” Mr Li Ka-shing said. He made his first donation to hospice care in Mainland China in 1998 and extended this philanthropic work to Hong Kong in 2007. This has benefited over 163,000 terminally ill cancer patients.

#### BEYOND PHYSICAL CARE

The physical existence of a hospice centre is as important as the services

it provides. Dr Leung To-wai, Chief of Service of the Department of Clinical Oncology in Queen Mary Hospital, sees the extraordinary benefits the centre brings. Multidisciplinary experts, such as doctors, social workers, nutritionists, physiotherapists and more, are present in most hospitals but are rarely concentrated to cater specifically for terminally ill cancer patients.

“Without the hospice centre, services are fragmented,” says Dr Leung. Now the centre gathers talent across the hospital and offers opportunities for all the relevant healthcare professionals to discuss the proper treatments for physical, social, psychological and spiritual care for the patients.

Dr Leung stresses the warm and cosy design of the hospice centre that has received positive feedback from the patients, “For terminal cancer patients, they face more miserable days than happy days. We want to minimise the pressure on them from seeing doctors in follow-up consultations.”

Ms Joe Huang Kang-pan, Assistant

Social Work Officer of the Department of Clinical Oncology in Queen Elizabeth Hospital, adds that the centre can be used for different activities including life celebrations, family gatherings, photo shoots and more. She recalls how depressed patients were cheered up after joining the centre’s activities. “What we do may be little, but it may have a big impact. We hope patients can continue to be happy even as their health deteriorates.”

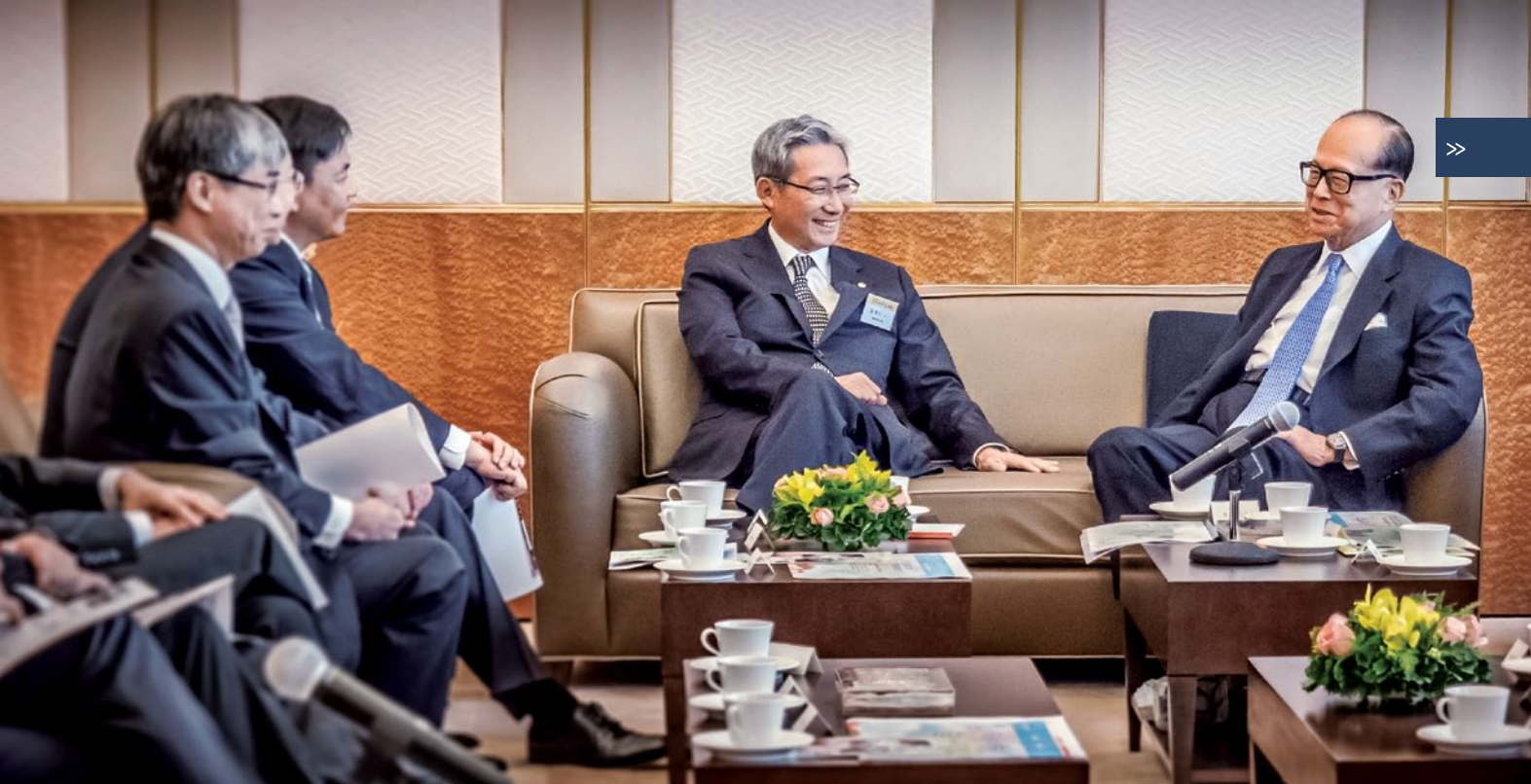
Ms Ng Cheuk-wah, Advanced Practice Nurse working with Dr Leung, shared one touching story. A female patient in her 50s hoped to witness her son’s wedding, but her health deteriorated quickly. Both families gathered beside the surgery room – with modest decorations and bright clothes for the patient – to celebrate the part of the wedding that included the exchange of wedding rings and the patient drinking the tea presented by the bride, her future daughter-in-law, signifying the bride’s acceptance into the husband’s family. The patient passed away peacefully the following day and the families were able to move on, free from the regret that the mother had missed this landmark family event.

 **Served**  
**27,000**  
terminally ill cancer  
patients with 88%  
pain control rate

Accumulated donation  
**\$120**  
million

 **Psychological counselling**  
**55,000**  
sessions

  
**82,000**  
Home care sessions



Mr Li Ka-shing shares his views with Professor John C Y Leong, Chairman of the Hospital Authority, and the healthcare professionals on the 'Heart of Gold' hospice service programme.

Palliative care is a humane endeavour that requires noble hearts, professional skills and years of experience to master the job. The requirements may be tough but when they are fulfilled, Mr Li's vision will come true: "Hope transcends and connects, and you bring peace, comfort and dignity."

#### FUNDS FOR MORE

Apart from funding for the construction of the centres, LKSF contributes to the annual hospice conference held by the Hospital Authority (HA) of Hong Kong. The conference gathers hospice staff from Hong Kong and the Mainland to share their experiences in palliative care.

LKSF also funds the HA's training of volunteers in hospice care. It is a nine-hour comprehensive training covering basic knowledge in palliative and cancer treatments, basic rules to engage with patients, communication skills and attitudes on life and death issues. After completing the training, volunteers are certified and screened before they are allowed to look after patients. Assistant Social Work Officer

**"Hospice care gives comfort and hope where only anguish and sorrow are apparent. We must encourage such meaningful work and offer help where it is needed."**

Mr Li Ka-shing

Ms Ho Mei-ling of Queen Mary Hospital says the selection criteria include the volunteering experience of the applicants, their readiness to undertake this challenging job and their enthusiasm for caring for patients.

#### 'HEART OF GOLD'

The healthcare team in the hospice centre is very grateful to LKSF's funding,

which has allowed the realisation of the centre and the assembly of a group of dedicated professionals. "It doesn't matter how hard we work. The best return is a smile shown on the patient's face," says Dr Leung.

Mr Li is also grateful to the professionals, saying, "Hospice care gives comfort and hope where only anguish and sorrow are apparent. We must encourage such meaningful work and offer help where it is needed."

Over the next three years, the Foundation will seek to involve more participants and will bolster community outreach programmes in an effort to strengthen and create greater awareness for palliative care services.

The philanthropic LKSF and the healthcare heroes have together served terminally ill cancer patients. In Neil Young's 'Heart of Gold', he sings "... I'm getting old, keeps me searching for a heart of gold." In the seventh year of the hospice programme in Hong Kong, the gold has been given and the heart of gold has been found. □

  
**230,000**  
Specialists clinics & centres service sessions

  
**77,000**  
hours of volunteer service

**Website and mobile app accessed 450,000 times**

  
**2,700**  
volunteers

