

A View Out in the Field

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The Lien Centre for Palliative Care (LCPC) team was very privileged to spend an entire day on retreat shadowing healthcare personnel from HCA Hospice Care and Tsao Foundation's Hua Mei Mobile Clinic on their home visits to patients. As part of LCPC's continuing efforts to reach out and better understand the state of palliative care in Singapore, the goal of this retreat was to see first-hand the challenges on the ground that patients, families and healthcare workers face.

Five LCPC staff members spent the day with Hua Mei Mobile Clinic and another five did the same with HCA Hospice Care.

The staff assigned to the Hua Mei Mobile Clinic first convened at the Tsao Foundation offices, where they were briefed on the workings and structure of the Foundation. Later, either in pairs or singly, they accompanied a doctor on the latter's daily visit to the home of a palliative care patient. On such calls, each doctor carries a backpack with medical supplies, including supplemental medication, a stethoscope, and first-aid items.

LCPC staff with the HCA Hospice team were assigned to the hospice's different satellite centres around the island. Each staff member shadowed a nurse carrying out patient visits in the assigned catchment area.

The HCA nurses typically complete five or six visits per day. Each nurse carries a backpack with a laptop, and pulls along an airplane cabin-sized wheeled suitcase containing medication, a stethoscope, and other medical equipment and accessories. The laptop is used to update patients' records, a task usually done during or just after a call on a patient.

Our staff members observed the work done and the interaction between the healthcare personnel and the patients during the calls at the patients' homes. The doctors and nurses performed standard medical checks, replaced dressings where needed, communicated with the relevant caregivers regarding care issues and medication, and chatted with each patient to get an update on changes in symptoms, treatment concerns, the patient's state of mind, and pressing social concerns, if any.

The dedication, professionalism and compassion shown by all the Hua Mei Mobile Clinic and HCA Hospice Care staff, who often go that extra mile for the patients and their families, was very impressive and touching. This retreat has given LCPC staff a better understanding of the people we are trying to help, and the community we serve.

Thank you, Hua Mei Mobile Clinic and HCA Hospice Care, for hosting our team and for such a memorable experience! ♥

About the Lien Centre for Palliative Care

The LCPC is a research and educational centre established in 2008 at the Duke-NUS Graduate Medical School, Singapore, in collaboration with the Lien Foundation. Our stakeholders are the National Cancer Centre and Singapore Health Services.



HCA Hospice team and LCPC staff setting off for home visits