

# End-of-life care to be improved: DPM Teo

Singaporeans are being encouraged to talk about end-of-life issues – even though many frown on discussing death and regard it as taboo.

Palliative care can help patients spend their last days in comfort, and reduce fear and anxiety for them and their family members, Deputy Prime Minister Teo Chee Hean said yesterday.

Speaking at a palliative care roadshow held by HCA Hospice Care and Nectar Care Service, Mr Teo said each year about 5,000 to 6,000 people receive palliative care.

“Given our ageing population, this number is expected to grow to about 10,000 by 2020,” he said.

The Ministry of Health has been boosting support for the sector and announced in June that it will increase the number of residential and home-based palliative care services.

The Medisave withdrawal limits for palliative care services will also be increased from January next year.

“In short, we are working hard to enhance the accessibility, quality and affordability of palliative care,” said Mr Teo, who is also the Home Affairs Minister.

The Health Ministry will also work with partners to raise awareness of end-of-life care.

For instance, it supported philanthropic group Lien Foundation when it organised an exhibition in Yishun and Toa Payoh last month. The exhibition aimed to get people talking about palliative care in creative ways through art, film, dialogue and puppetry performances.

Madam Sim Keow Lian, 63, who attended the roadshow, said she has started making end-of-life plans for herself after her mother died eight years ago following a stroke.

“I saw her suffer, yet I didn’t know how to make her feel better,” said the mother of four. “But I’ve now done up my will and I’ve told my kids what I want my funeral to be like.”

**Pearl Lee**