

The Malta Hospice Movement

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The Malta Hospice Movement is a voluntary charitable organisation managed by a council composed of professional and lay people for persons who are suffering from Cancer.

The Malta Hospice Movement was founded in 1987, after discussions were held in the Catholic Institute regarding the problem that patients and their relatives were facing.

Hospice Care requires team work, doctors, nurses, social workers, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, the clergy and lay volunteer helpers. All have a valid contribution to the total care of the patient and his/her family. Relatives and/or friends may ask the patients' general practitioner or hospital consultant to refer him/her to hospice and this may be for patient, or relative counselling, for advice on symptom control, for day or home care, according to the immediate needs of the patient and his/her family.

When patients are referred to hospice care they may be anxious, weary of pain and fearful of the unknown. Some are already aware

that their life expectancy is weeks rather than months, many are suffering severe pain or discomfort from other distressing symptoms. The first task of the Hospice doctor and nurse is to gain the patients' confidence and trust by providing appropriate treatment to alleviate the physical suffering. It requires the administration of medication, therapies and nursing procedures which when correctly applied will relieve the physical suffering while avoiding diminution of the patients' mental alertness.

Other causes of suffering must then be tackled: social, emotional and spiritual. A dying patient is a living person and the Hospice's aim is to enable patients to live until they die and to put the remaining precious weeks to good purpose. It is very easy for dying patients to become isolated and lonely. They are weak, dependant, vulnerable and in need of that security, which can only be felt through love and kindness. They need to feel wanted, loved and accepted and often have to be helped to accept the reality of dying.

The Aims of the Hospice Movement

To provide palliative medical and nursing care, complementary to existing hospital and community services, to patients with progressive and incurable illness.



To provide physical, psychological, social and spiritual care for the patient suffering from an illness diagnosed as terminal.



To care for the families of dying patients during illness and bereavement.



To be a centre for the teaching and study of terminal care.

O.T. involvement with Cancer Patients

We have been involved with Cancer Patients since November 1993 and started working with the Hospice Movement since October 1995.

O.T. involvement with Cancer Patients in Boffa Hospital consists of Home Visits and individual sessions.

The most valuable thing we can give to patients is our time. This provides them with the opportunity to express their fears and anxieties and these may well be dispersed by unhurried and repeated discussions.

Although we attend once weekly at Hospice Movement we have a good contact with the Multi-disciplinary team.

O.T. services at Hospice include:- group therapy in the Day Centre, individual sessions, advice on certain problems and energy saving techniques and home visits.

Conclusion:

As the patient's life degenerates there may be a parallel disintegration of the family. Even before the patient dies, the mental anguish of grief will be evident, and the total care of the dying patient includes care of the family with bereavement support.

Grief is the price to be paid for loving someone, and there is no short cut through it. It is however a particular aspect of suffering for which a firm religious faith will give great solace.