LIFE REVIEW PROJECT FOR ADVANCED CANCER PATIENTS UNDER PALLIATIVE CARE SETTING

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Introduction
Psychological distress is common in patients with advanced cancers. Common manifestations include anxiety, depression, suicidal ideation, feelings of hopelessness and sense of meaningless in life. Recent studies have shown that life review interviews were effective in alleviating psycho-spiritual distress. To address the psychological needs of patients with advanced cancer, the ‘Life Review Project’ was started in 2013 in the Department of Clinical Oncology of Queen Mary Hospital.

Objectives
The objective of the project is to provide psycho-spiritual support for cancer patients and their family in the palliative care setting. Through storytelling and integration skills on past experiences, patients get insights and positive energy to cope with the psychological distress associated with cancer. The spirituality can be enhanced by making meaning on their life experiences.

Methodology
The project is supervised by a social worker who has experience in conducting life review. The service is open to patients attending palliative clinic. Patients with impaired mental function are excluded. Since the service involves sharing of personal information, consents have been obtained before commencement of the service. Life review interviews were conducted to review life experiences important to the patient and contribute to the making of a life book. Activities like photo editing, picture searching and story-writing provide opportunities for patient and family to re-visit the past, express feelings, identify values and explore meanings of life.
Result
Eight patients have been recruited since 2013-2014, including three male and five female. The age of the participants ranged from 58-81 and the diagnosis included lung, breast, colorectal and prostate cancers. Most of the patient and family are thankful for the making of the life book with positive comments. One patient viewed the life book as 'an expression of support and care from the palliative care team'. Another patient viewed this as 'a reminder of a colourful and energetic life' which supports the patient to bravely face the challenges in the future. The wife of a deceased patient expressed that the life book has become a heritage of the family and she proudly exhibited the life book in patient's funeral ceremony.