P4.2  The Changing Culture in Patient-centred Care  16:15  Convention Hall B

Quality Palliative Care Services – the Growing Demand
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Palliative care used to be thought of as end-of-Life care. It is now realised that patients diagnosed with life-limiting conditions may need palliative care for many years before death, and that palliative care does not signal the end of all curative treatments. Rather, it is part of the continuum of holistic care alongside therapies that alter the course of the disease and prolong survival. Palliative care helps to alleviate symptoms, optimise physical and mental function and enables patients and their families to work through the options they have to achieve their life goals.

Public health measures and medical advances have enabled life expectancy to increase, not only in developed economies, but also low and middle income countries, and the whole world faces an ageing population. Technological improvements have provided an increasing array of options that may have an incremental improvement to survival. Governments have difficulty choosing which options, for example, a new drug, should be made available to all, while avoiding an impression of rationing. For the man in the street, as a consumer of health care, it is difficult to work out the trade-offs and alternatives. All the more is it important to have that conversation at a personal level to achieve the best quality of life consistent with a person’s life goals.

Yet what constitutes Quality Palliative Care? From whose view point do we measure this?

This presentation will refer to the Quality of Death Index produced by the Economist Intelligence Unit, the tools healthcare institutions in different parts of the world use to measure and improve quality of care in palliative care, and ask whether the concerns of all stakeholders, including patients and their families, are being addressed.