

Australasian Palliative Link International (APLI)

APLI 2014 Forum

On Saturday 3 May 2014, more than 30 people attending the APLI forum were fortunate to learn firsthand about the recent experiences of APLI mentors in India. We also learnt about the foundations of a cancer service incorporating palliative care in Timor-Leste.

The following speakers inspired the audience with their recollections.

1. Sophie Lam

Sophie was an APLI pioneer to the islands of Lakshadweep, off the south-west coast of India. The archipelago has a population of 10,000 people inhabiting 10 of its 30 islands. Lakshadweep has a newly-established community palliative care service staffed by paid workers and volunteers.

During her visit, Sophie provided grand round presentations, home visits and formal teaching sessions. She applied her considerable clinical knowledge, communicated and collaborated with her Indian counterparts and was challenged by juggling the management of scarce resources.

Sophie's contribution led to her acceptance as a mentor for the new service. She adopts a 'fellow traveller' approach and continues to enjoy her mentoring relationship through emails and social media.

2. Sarah Rose

Sarah joined Sophie on her pioneering visit to Lakshadweep. It was the first time a health organisation had visited these islands. Sarah commented on the welcome they received from the leader of the Palliative Care service and how it was a harbinger for their successful visit.

The visit to Patna was less successful as the large hospital of 800 beds had no obvious champion for palliative care.

3. Zoe Wainer

The start of Zoe's journey into global health was at Peter Mac in Melbourne when she was introduced to Timor-Leste's first First Lady Kirsty Sword-Gusmao. The Australian-born Kirsty spent time at Peter Mac as a patient.

Zoe's spotlight is on a cancer service in Timor-Leste and how the new service will fit with Australia's fledgling role in global health. When approached for advice on a cancer service in Timor-Leste, Zoe joined forces with Steve Bracks, former Premier of the State of Victoria. Together they visited Timor-Leste, met with the Prime Minister and others and explored the terrain.

Zoe is looking at several aspects of service development in Timor-Leste, including industry links for the supply of discounted medicines, overseas aid funding from the Australian government and Peter Mac's role in the Asia Pacific region.

Timor-Leste has a strong network of Catholic nuns who may be enlisted to assist in the delivery of palliative care.

4. Wendy Salmon and Val Hughes

Wendy and her medical counterpart, Chris Drummond, visited Agartala, close to the Indian border with Bangladesh. The impact of their visit was evident as they imparted their clinical expertise and demonstrated their approach to dying patients. The cultural norm is for patients to die at home. Wendy and Chris' community visits were to remote and inaccessible dwellings. Wendy noted that the doctor accompanying them on one community visit took notes to remind himself of their manner in dealing with dying patients and their families. '

5. Mary Duffy

Mary is nurse co-ordinator of the Lung Service at Peter Mac and a Masters graduate. Mary teamed up with Odette to visit the Jaipur teaching hospital. Mary imparted her knowledge to graduate students and noted that the majority were male. Her topics included breathlessness and quality of care.

2. Themes emerging

1. Leadership at the host agency is a predictor of success of visit
2. Doctor/nurse team proves to be mutually supportive
3. Social media is important to development of APLI
4. Recruits/participants can be seasoned 'aid workers' or first-timers
5. APLI could benefit from PeterMac's endorsement
6. Visiting team needs to be flexible and responsive to host agency, its needs, staff, culture, etc.

3. Program

Session: What's new in APLI

Dr Sophia Lam: What volunteering for Hamrahi in Lakshadweep as an Advance Trainee has taught me

Timor Presentation

Zoe Wainer - Lessons learnt from screening & prevention in International Cancer Care – Applying them to Palliative Care development in Timor

Mary Duffy - Challenging the divide: What is a lung cancer nurse coordinator doing as a Project Hamrahi Palliative Care volunteer?

Val Hughes and Wendy Salmon - One place, 2 views. A nursing perspective.

Sarah Rose – Two trips, worlds apart. What makes an Indian palliative care service successful.