



Reaching Out to them
... Together
E-Newsletter

PALLIUM INDIA
CARE BEYOND CURE

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Dr Stuart Brown from the International Network for Cancer Treatment and Research (INCTR) visited India recently and we got him to share some of his experiences with us. At the end of this newsletter, you find one of them, a touching one. But first, let us share some items of news with you.

Tom's 1600 Kilometer bicycle ride:

Tom Middlemiss, a British doctor, did voluntary work with Pallium India's Trivandrum Institute of Palliative Sciences for a period of 8 months. (We are grateful to IAHPIC for assisting Tom in his endeavour). In our last issue we had reported Tom's 1600 KM ride from Trivandrum to the Gateway of India at Mumbai in his bicycle with one gear, with a bold sign "Palliative care for all". Tom concluded his ride with a flashy reception at the historic Gateway of India on the 16th of July 09. At the reception, Tom reports, "The bike was given away as hoped for. The recipient was a 13 year old lad whose father had recently died of cancer."

Writing about his travel, Tom says, "*Hindus, Muslims, Christians and Buddhists. I have been showered with kindness, warmth and interest for my travels. By having the opportunity of working in a place, you get the opportunity of seeing beyond the tourism industry of that region or country. I would never have been able to see what I have and that is surely one the highlights of being here. It is such a rich experience and one that gives consideration for future holidays*".

But Tom, you are the one who gave so much to our people – such a big chunk of your life. Thank you for all that you have done for us!

World Palliative Care Day, 10 October 2009:

The theme for 2009 is 'Discovering your voice' highlighting the voices of those affected by hospice and palliative care. The organisers invite you to *tell your story* to strengthen our messages about the benefits of hospice and palliative care. One story or message from those that are submitted online will be chosen at the end of August to be the unifying factor of the global event. This story or message will be read out at events and activities for World Day and Voices for Hospices worldwide. Find out more from <http://www.worldday.org/share-your-story/>

Good news from Panama:

Heartening news comes for Panama, a developing country that links North and South America, as reported in IAHPC newsletter. A presidential decree eliminates many barriers to pain relief. We congratulate Dr Rosa Buitrago for her leadership, Dr Liliana De Lima, her mentor and all at Pain and Policy Studies Group (PPSG) of Madison-Wisconsin for making it all happen in so many countries in the world. For more information please see http://www.hospicecare.com/news/09/07/regional_reports.html.

Next six weeks' course at Trivandrum:

The next six weeks' course on palliative care for doctors and nurses starts on 7 September 2009. Please find details at <http://www.palliumindia.org/courses.htm>

Wolfson International Bursaries:

We had informed you of this in the last issue, but would like to remind you: the 5th of August is the last date for receipt of applications for Wolfson International bursaries for people in developing countries to attend educational programs. Grants of up to £1,500 (or in some selected situations up to £5,000) are available. For details please go to <http://www.helpthehospices.org.uk/our-services/grants/internationalgrants/wolfson-international-bursaries/>

Poster exhibition by Palliative Care Network (PCN):

PCN is the first international networking community for palliative care professionals. To commemorate its second year anniversary PCN announces a poster exhibition, to be hosted on

the PCN community. The first, second and third prizes will win US \$ 500, \$300 and \$ 200 respectively. Find details at <http://www.pcn-e.com/community/pg/profile/Posters2009>.

Meet some enthusing volunteers!

We met up with Sundara Rajan and Deepa at Chennai. The famous cancer institute at Adayar in Chennai had conducted a one-day seminar on palliative care. It was organized by Ms Vidhubala on behalf of the Institute's department of Psycho-oncology in association with Cancer Aid Society and Pallium India. There were 97 participants, a wonderful mix of volunteers, social workers, nurses, doctors and other professionals.

Sundar and his wife Deepa, both engineers at Larsen & Toubro, work in their spare time as volunteers at CAN-STOP (Cancer Support Therapy To Overcome Pain). CANSTOP, a Community outreach program of Sundaram Medical Foundation dedicated to providing counseling services to patients and family, conducting awareness programmes and screening camps.

"Give us a training program", Sundar said. "There has been a lot of talk about training for doctors and nurses; but we need training too."

Hats off to you, Sundar, for the intuitive knowledge that you need training to help others. Too often we – professionals and laymen – set about doing good without quite understanding the problem and solutions, and sometimes end up doing more harm than good. We have admiration and respect for your humanity, compassion and sensitivity. We wish you and CANSTOP all the very best. We do have training programs for volunteers; but we sure need to develop more on this area and open it up to more people. We will."

Thank you Mr Anathakrishnan. You are a role model!

One of the live wires at the Chennai seminar was Mr Ananthakrishnan, who had also visited us in Trivandrum recently and addressed our group. Mr Ananthakrishnan is a cancer survivor who works with Cancer Aid Society as a volunteer. He had had cancer of the larynx and underwent laryngectomy. He has no voice box now, but he not only is able to talk, but also travels widely and gives lectures. And that is without using very expensive gadgets. Now that

he has gone through the cancer journey and come out of it with some positives in his life, he has chosen it as his mission to help people with tracheostomy to talk. We hope to work with him more in future.

Pain conference at Al Ain:

Dr. Mohammad Hidayatullah from U.A.E invites you to 'The First International Comprehensive Pain Management Conference' to be held on 27th and 28th October 2009 in Al Ain Intercontinental Hotel Al Ain United Arab Emirates. Visit:

<http://www.tawamhospital.ae/painconf/default.asp>

Together! 2009: Joint conference of Asia Pacific Hospice Network (APHN) and Palliative Care Australia, Perth, 24-27 September.

The conference organizers have announced an attractive group booking discount. Don't miss out! Get together a group booking and receive 30% off the registration price. See www.conlog.com.au/palliativecare2009/groupbookings

Respecting children:

Dr Stuart Brown from International Network for Cancer Treatment and Research (INCTR) was in India on a mission of evaluation and planning and spent his time visiting palliative care centers at Tata Memorial Hospital (Mumbai), Cipla Palliative Care Center (Pune), MNJ Institute of Oncology (Hyderabad) and Trivandrum Institute of Palliative Sciences (Kerala). When work was done and we were relaxing over *Porottas* and curried chicken, we asked him about his life, his work and his involvement with palliative care. Let us share with you a memorable experience with one of his patients during his ten years in Saudi Arabia.

His patient was an eight-year old boy from Yemen. Like in India, all over Middle East, sometimes there is a reluctance to talk about diagnosis or prognosis and the physician needs to be careful in what he says. The boy wanted to know his situation. Stuart smiled, made some inane replies such as "let us see ...we shall look after you" and so on and left. The next day he visited and the boy said,

"Dr Brown, Please sit down."

Stuart sat down.

“Dr Brown. I am angry with you. You lied to me”.

Taken aback, Stuart did not know what to say, and the boy continued. “I know I have cancer. I want to know whether I can be cured. It is important. You see, I need to look after my parents. I must know the truth”.

The boy took the news of incurability quietly and went on to make plans for the time that he had left. The directness, the innocence and the resilience of children never cease to amaze those working with children. Yet too often we fail to study their problems properly and to do them justice. We need to change! Thank you, Stuart, for sharing the story with us.

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