Editorial

Good Samaritans

Many wondered at the outset how an organization like the Madre de Amor Hospice Foundation started in Los Baños, in August 1994, whose vision of caring for the terminally ill and the dying could survive without substantial logistics. But indeed God cannot be outdone in His generosity. Little by little tiny droplets filled the bucket and soon there was enough to push through with its initial goals. Now in its almost thirteenth year, we maintain the solid track record of being the first and oldest community-based hospice center in the Philippines.

As its operational expenses expand however, we count on the continuous and selfless support of our donors and beneficiaries here and abroad. We pay tribute to their unwavering faith in the hospice cause.

May they keep the fire burning!

The Hospice Movement in the Philippines
Rhodora DR. Ocampo, MD

“This is the moment when the physician can say to the patient: I can no longer cure you, but I can continue to care for you. In these words lies the definition of hospice care.”

These are the words of the late Dr. Josefina B. Magno, a hospice pioneer, mentor and friend.

It was in 1989 that hospice care was introduced in the Philippines when it was integrated into the Family Health Care Program of the Department of Family Medicine of the Philippine General Hospital. The prime mover then was Dr. Catherine Lisondra-Krings. The training was however limited to medical students and family medicine residents.

The Philippine Cancer Society (PCS) began the first Home Care Hospice service in 1991. The hospice team was composed of a doctor, a nurse, a social worker and a volunteer. They would visit the patients in their homes and teach the family how to take care of their loved one. Over the next twelve years, the PCS hospice team served over a thousand patients and their families.

In 1994, the PCS initiated a series of training and education workshops nationwide. They solicited the help of Dr. Josefina B. Magno, a Filipina hospice pioneer in the United States.

The First National Convention on Hospice Palliative Care was held in January 1995, during the National Cancer Consciousness week. Six foreign hospice palliative care experts were invited to share their expertise: Drs. Cynthia Goh, Rosalie Shaw, Carey Stratton Hill, Roger Woodruff, Josefina Magno and Sister Geraldine Tan. At the same time, the Department of Health and PCS released the first manual for caregivers. The manual covers all aspects of supportive care – from the medical management to psychosocial and spiritual care of the patients. It came out both in English and Filipino.
The hospice movement suddenly and quickly spread in the country. Hospital-based hospice programs were begun at the Makati Medical Center, the Philippine Children’s Medical Center in 1994 and the University of Santo Tomas in 1997. Community-based hospices were likewise formed notably the Madre De Amor Foundation in Laguna and the Ayala Alabang Hospice in Muntinlupa, both in 1994. The Kythe Foundation (1995) a volunteer group started by psychologists from the Ateneo de Manila University, Icar Castro and Girlie Garcia provided a child life program for children with cancer. Its program is now instituted in nine hospitals nationwide.

The Visayan region was not to be left behind. In Iloilo, two hospital-based hospices were established: the Iloilo Mission Hospital Pain and Palliative Care Clinic under Dr. Celina Vilches (1997) and the Hospice Home Care Program at the Western Visayas Medical Center with Dr. Annabelle Guzman (1998). Cebu City also had its share of hospice initiatives under the auspices of Drs. Betty Pasco, Dennis Tudtud, Betty Talaver and Jayson Villegas and Sister Mary Lucilla Perpinan.

The Canossian Sisters of Charity (1999) incorporated hospice care in its community programs in Bukidnon and Cagayan de Oro in Mindanao.

As more and more cancer patients were being cared for by hospices, other diseases which will also benefit from hospice care were placed into focus. These included AIDS, end stage kidney, liver, lung diseases, and progressive neurological disorders. In our country, the first ever hospice for infectious disease was established in San Lazaro Hospital: the Starfish hospice for rabies patients in 2001.

The PALCARE volunteer group was formed in 2002; they support the hospice patients of the Philippine General Hospital.

Hospice training and education has also evolved through the creation of the first post graduate residency and fellowship program in hospice palliative care at the University of the Philippines- Philippine General Hospital in 2000. It has since graduated 10 fellows. The Madre de Amor foundation as one of the longest running hospices in the country has become a valuable resource and regularly conducts a training program for groups and communities who may wish to start their own hospices. The most recent of these are the St. Louis University with Dr. Jasmin Igama (Jan 2007) and the senior citizen group of Bel Air Makati with Atty. Ramon Garcia (March 2007). Post graduate courses are also offered at the Department of Family Medicine at PGH.

The PCS has remained steadfast in its commitment to the development of the hospice movement in our country. In 2003, the PCS initiated the formation of the National Hospice Palliative Care Council of the Philippines. This now called Hospice Philippines. By coming together under one umbrella, Hospice Philippines seeks to gain government support for the hospice movement especially for the provision of morphine as well as inclusion of hospice in the national health program of our country. Hospice Philippines was formally launched in February 17, 2004. Atty. Asuncion B. Kalalo of the Ayala Alabang Hospice is the first president.

This year marks another milestone in the history of hospice in our country. We are proud to host the 7th Asia Pacific Hospice Palliative Care conference in September 27-29, 2007 at the Sofitel Philippine Plaza. This biennial conference will gather the experts in the region who will share their knowledge and experience. No less than President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo will be the keynote speaker at the Opening Ceremony. Our main guest will be Dr. Eric Cassel, a noted hospice expert and author of numerous books, among them “The Nature of Suffering”. It will be a wonderful opportunity for us to learn, share and network with the people and movers of hospice.

At the hospice, when cure is no longer possible, healing can begin.

(For more information about the conference, visit our website at www.aphc2007.com or email us at secretariat@aphc2007.com or call (02) 733 3485.)

Rhodora DR. Ocampo, MD

A TIMELY RECONCILIATION

Jose Santos was a devoted and dedicated father who wanted to leave a legacy to his four children. He was afflicted with emphysema that devastated him because of difficulty in breathing.

Jose was an old bachelor when he married a single mother by the name of Maria fulfilling a dream of a Jose and Maria pair well known in biblical history.

Frail and sickly, he hardly had a chance to provide for his family that included the children of Maria from a
previous relationship. He held various informal jobs before he got sick including a short stint at IRRI.

The family used to live in Bayog close to Jose’s relatives. However, they decided to move to Putho and occupied a small hut through the kindness of an acquaintance of Maria. They had no electricity, but the lot owner shared a deep well as source of water which enabled Maria to do laundry work for neighbors. This was their main source of livelihood when Jose got sick.

The older children were quite resourceful. The elder son got a job as “pulot boy” at the UPLB tennis courts. Through his diligence and perseverance, he learned the game and eventually became an informal tennis instructor. The younger children later joined him when Jose became totally incapacitated. The family depended on the income of the children in providing the daily needs of the family.

The girls are exceptionally intelligent as evidenced by the medals hanging on their walls so that they continued school through the kindness of neighbors and friends in the community.

When Jose’s condition deteriorated, oxygen became a necessity. Through the resourcefulness of Maria in securing financial help from institutions and even individuals, oxygen became available. His short stint at IRRI was very helpful in legitimizing assistance from SSS for his medical needs.

Through the representation of hospice volunteers, the Barangay captain of Putho allowed them to connect to an electric post that brought electricity at night, such that the ventilation of their house improved by using an electric fan. Hospice volunteers contributed materials and coordinated the connection. These was a tremendous relief to Maria because of the reduction in the demand of oxygen thus lessening their expense.

Medical assistance and spiritual guidance to the family were provided by hospice. Then Jose brought to our attention his informal living with Maria without the benefit of marriage and his desire to give legitimacy to his children, immediate action was taken to gather all requirements for a church wedding. Although Jose’s records were immediately obtained, Maria’s became a challenge. She was born and baptized in Gubat, Sorsogon and as the marriage had to be officiated soonest because Jose’s condition was fast deteriorating, our Parish Priest, Fr. Thor took the initiative to contact Gubat by phone.

Since there was no record of Maria’s baptism and confirmation, Fr. Thor administered both sacraments on their wedding day.

The beautiful garden wedding attended by family, neighbors, friends and hospice volunteers moved everyone to tears of joy.

On April 4,2007, he hired a tricycle early in the morning and visited all his relatives in Los Baños and reconciled with them. Despite a very precarious condition as he was constantly connected to the source of oxygen at home, he survived the trip without oxygen.

Upon arrival at home about noon, he prepared lunch for the family and rested. Within an hour, he passed away.

Jose a devoted Catholic, instilled in his children a deep sense of devotion to the Blessed Mother, and the love for the Scriptures.

Thank God for giving Jose the grace of a happy death.

Lily Madamba

June: Hospice Day Care

On June 22, we had our Day Care Activity. This was hosted by Caroline Lescano and Alvin Gutierrez, an occupational and physical therapist respectively, from the Los Baños Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Center Inc. They are our new partners for the Day Care. It was a bit different from the previous day care sessions wherein the focus was on livelihood. The current program, targets our still ambulatory patients. It includes physical and mental exercises, games and spiritual feeding.

There were 16 attendees, mostly from Calamba. After lunch Marsha, a massage attendant from A Votre Sante Wellness Center gave each patient a neck, back and shoulder massage.

Everybody is looking forward to the next activity on July 20, where we promised a free hair cut for the patients.

Gina G. Cabrera
APRIL: Resurrection Rites

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

Be a volunteer.
Volunteers play a vital role in the hospice. They come from all walks of life to lend their time and talent for our patients. Volunteers help in various ways: patient and family support and care; administration and clerical support; and organizing and participating in other hospice activities.

Send a donation.
The service is currently funded by private donations. Your support is needed to enable us to continue providing services to those who need them. We are always seeking to improve the quality of care. That is possible only through your generous contributions.

For more information about the Foundation and Hospice, please contact:

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