

Canadians Deserve High Quality End-of-Life Care Wherever They Die

(October 18, 2009 - Winnipeg, Manitoba) Each year, more than 259,000 Canadians die. But only 2 or 3 out of 10 are lucky enough to receive hospice palliative end-of-life care. Even fewer receive support to help them and their families cope with grief and bereavement.

The Canadian Hospice Palliative Care Association (CHPCA) believes that every Canadian should be able to face death surrounded by those they love, feeling safe, comfortable and cared for, in a setting of their choice.

We now know a great deal about how to provide care and ease suffering at the end of life, yet too few Canadians are benefiting from that knowledge.

Canadians die in many settings: in hospitals, in long-term care facilities, in residential hospices, at home, in shelters and on the streets - and they should not have to be "lucky" to get the care they need, when and where they need it.

All providers and all settings should have the knowledge, skills and attitudes to care for people at end of life. The settings must work effectively as a system so people can move easily from one setting to another to meet their end-of-life needs. Currently many systems like acute care hospitals, home care programs and long-term care facilities seem to operate separately. A better coordinated, more comprehensive and integrated health care system would benefit us all.

Over the past five years, Canada has made some progress. More Canadians dying at home are receiving better end-of-life care - although there's still a shortage of skilled people and resources in most provinces. Some hospitals have created programs that take palliative care to wherever people are in the hospital. Several communities have established hospices for the homeless.

But much more remains to be done - and time is running out. We have an aging population. By 2026, the number of Canadians dying each year will increase by 40% to 330,000. By 2036, the number will have increased by 65% to 425,000.

The Canadian Hospice Palliative Care Association is committed to working with government and all parts of the health care system -- and to developing a systems approach that will ensure all Canadians have access to compassionate, evidence-based care at end of life.

Its 2009 Canadian Hospice Palliative Care Conference: Voyages in Care and Understanding taking place from October 18-21, at the Winnipeg Convention Center in Winnipeg, Manitoba, will feature

presentations on providing high quality end-of-life care in many settings, and on the challenges and successes in helping Canadians move between settings and get the care they need at end of life.

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