Editorial

Dear Colleagues,

This is the first issue of our newsletter in 2004. In this issue, we are very honoured to have Dr. Derek Doyle, our honorary advisor, to teach us on the importance of spiritual care and to understand that it is an integral part of the holistic care that we should offer to our patients. The instinctive nature of ‘man searching for meaning’, especially when facing life and death issues, remains unchanged despite change of values in the so-called modernized society. Dr. Doyle also affirms that spiritual care should be, and can be taught in our professional training. His article highlights an important theme of this issue: Spirituality. Follow on that, Miss Marcella Lo and Dr. Antony Leung from Haven of Hope Hospital echo how suffering, healing, meaning and hope would affect our patients and they share a few illustrative life-stories which you may have come across similar experience. Dr. Doris Tse, in her article on history taking in palliative care, demonstrates beautifully how the history taking process can embrace the spiritual aspect of care when one moves from ‘factual information gathering’ to ‘person-to-person interaction’. Yvonne, a friend of many of us, shares with us much of her inner feelings and thoughts during her time of difficulty. It is a real spiritual journey of a doctor-patient and we would give her all the best wishes! The session is concluded by the reflection article by Dr. Michael Sham on the closing down of Nam Long Hospital.

The other major theme of this issue is on the ‘First Joint Hong Kong Macau Palliative Care Symposium’ held in January. It was a precious experience and it gave an opportunity for palliative care workers of the two places to share and to communicate. We would like to thank our colleagues in Kiang Wu Hospital for their hospitality. In this issue, we have a series of articles by the speakers summarizing their presentations. Special thanks to Miss S H Law, Miss Y M Leung and Dr. Tammy Yung for reporting on the development of palliative care service in Macau and the use of ketamine in their setting.

I would like to draw your attention to the coming Palliative Care Symposium for Health Care Professionals: "A Panoramic View of Palliative Care in Hong Kong" to be held on 26 June 2004. Looking forward to seeing you there. Finally, I would like to thank Dr. Doris Tse, for her dedication in the designing of this newsletter.

Dr. KS Lau, chief editor