Paediatric Palliative Care in Kuwait

Hilal Al-Sayer

Kuwait Association for the Care of Children in Hospital (KACCH), Amiri Hospital, Kuwait

Paediatric Palliative Care – What Does This Mean for Kuwait?

Each year, children in Kuwait die from congenital or acquired conditions that range from a few months to many years, during which many must undergo extensive medical treatment. These children and their families need special medical care that has not existed in Kuwait until recently. Now this care will be provided by a team of specialists in paediatric palliative care who not only provide medical care and symptom relief, but also psychological, emotional and spiritual support. Professionals have come to recognize that the families of children with life-threatening conditions need the support of the medical team as much as the sick child does. In paediatric palliative care, psychological, emotional and spiritual needs are addressed through an approach that helps children live normal lives by pursuing childhood activities surrounded by their families and friends while undergoing medical treatment for their condition. Additionally, the child and family are given choices of where the treatment will take place, whether at home, returning to hospital or having specialized support in a children's hospice.

One of the highlights of the First International Middle East Conference on Paediatric Palliative Care was the screening of Prof. Leora Kuttner's latest award-winning documentary film, *Making Every Moment Count*. This film demonstrated very movingly the difficulties that families face when their child is in the end stages of life

and how they can be helped with the support of expert, caring professionals who are sensitive to the child's and family's needs, and skilful in their responses.

Another special presentation was by Alia Al-Ghunaim, the architect of Bayt Abdullah Children's Hospice, who discussed the design and philosophy of the first children's hospice in the Middle East. Bayt Abdullah is a new concept in hospice design, bringing all the elements of palliative care, family support, children's play areas, entertainment and education together in an environment created specifically for these very special children and their families.

The conference ended with a film of the groundbreaking ceremony for Bayt Abdullah, which had been held just a few days before the conference started. One thousand schoolchildren attended the ceremony on the 20,000 m² site where Bayt Abdullah will be built. Close to the sea in Sulaibikhat Bay and bordering Kuwait's Ministry of Health, Bayt Abdullah will be the final stage in the development of a fully comprehensive paediatric palliative care service in Kuwait. A specialist team of doctors, nurses, child life specialists and nutritionists have already come together as Paedpals, the paediatric home care team, giving children with life-limiting and life-threatening conditions, and their families, an alternative to returning to hospital for their medical care. For these children and their families and friends, Bayt Abdullah Children's Hospice will endeavour to make every moment count.