Report urges better end-of-life planning

It highlights gaps in care and suggests ways to improve in areas like costs, family support

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Political Correspondent

When it comes to talking about death and dying, Singaporeans on characteristically avoid the topic.

But this has to change as the country ages, with enrolment into national plan widows and widowers prepared for their lives to end. According to the 2017 report, 39% of Singaporeans are widows and widowers.

In Singapore, we place a lot of emphasis on the first time house-the 1st home gives a sense of freedom and independence. But this is not a really important aspect of life for very few people actually play in the 1st home role. More important for many people is the need to have a home, the sense of security and comfort it provides. This is where end-of-life care comes in.

The report found that there were gaps in end-of-life care planning, with some patients not being informed about their options or being overwhelmed by the choices available. It also highlighted the importance of family support during this time, with families often left to make decisions alone. The report recommended the need for more support for families in these situations.

Moleen Tang
Seow Soon Jin
and Rachel Tan

Seow Soon Jin, Co-founder, Director of Volunteers at the Kumpang Senior Activity Centre, said: "Our members never talk about these things. We just want to live a full life."

One common theme mentioned was the lack of awareness among the general public about end-of-life planning. The report suggested that more awareness campaigns should be launched to promote end-of-life planning, especially among young people.

Kick-starting talk on death and dying early

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Although Madam Seow Soon Jin is active, independent and healthy for her age, she is not afraid to talk about death and dying. "One of my wishes is to be remembered as a valuable person who has lived a good life," she said.

She and her husband, Thailand-based business partner, have been planning their end-of-life arrangements for many years. They have signed a living will and appointed a health-care proxy to make decisions on their behalf if they are unable to do so.

Both took part in a workshop organized by the Hospice Foundation, which offers counseling and support to individuals with life-limiting illnesses.

They are not alone in their preparations. The report, "The state of end-of-life care in Singapore," found that 60% of respondents had discussed their wishes with family members.

The report also highlighted the importance of palliative care, which provides relief from pain and other symptoms of a serious illness. It is crucial for patients and their families to be informed about their options and the available support systems.

Key recommendations

The report makes several recommendations to improve end-of-life care in Singapore:

1. Increase awareness and education about end-of-life planning and palliative care.
2. Provide more support for families during end-of-life care.
3. Establish a national end-of-life care strategy.
4. Improve access to palliative care services.
5. Enhance communication between patients, families, and healthcare professionals.
6. Ensure that healthcare professionals are well-trained and have adequate support.

The report calls on the government to take action to address these issues and improve end-of-life care in Singapore.