

# Community Engagement: Nurturing of Community Volunteers to Serve Cancer Patients

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## Introduction

The volunteer services have been well developed in Hong Kong East Cluster hospitals in the last decade. However, such volunteer recruitment programs are usually targeted at recruiting volunteers to serve general patients. With the increasing number of cancer patients and development of new services, there is pressing need to recruit more volunteers to serve cancer patients and their families. The Integrated Palliative Day Care Centre (IPDCC) at TSKH, the Hospice Day Centre and the Cancer Patient Resource Centre at PYNEH provide a good platform to foster engagement and development of community volunteers.

## Purpose of the Project

- To mobilize patient and community volunteers to improve quality of service for cancer patients and families
- To enhance knowledge and skills of volunteers in providing psychosocial and spiritual support
- To foster personal growth of volunteers through their participating in volunteered service
- To promote a harmonious and caring community

## Material & Methods

Strategies to recruit volunteers:

- Organize 2 major Volunteer Recruitment Programs with subsequent Skills Enhancement Training and regular Feedback Sessions.
- Recruit volunteers registered under the "Volunteer Movement" program of Social Welfare Department.
- Collaborate with NGOs such as LAZARUS to provide home visit service; Comfort Care Concern Group and Society for the Promotion of Hospice Care for patient programs.
- Engage local community partners e.g. Parent-Teacher Association, Charity Group of business sector and volunteered performers group to participate in patient mass programs.

## Results

About 130 volunteers were successfully recruited through the recruitment exercises. In 2006 to 2007, the total service hour of volunteers at IPDCC is 1,820 hours. Volunteers participate in a wide range of services which include serving as instructors for interest classes, assistants in running day programs, providing patient escort service, clerical support and home visit. The contribution of voluntary service for cancer services has been highly appreciated by patients and families. Volunteers have repeatedly expressed Job satisfaction and mutual growth in different occasions.

## Conclusions

Volunteers are important partners of the multi-disciplinary team in providing holistic care to cancer patients and families. They contribute greatly to provide comfort care and to promote quality of life for cancer patients and families. Continuous nurturing and development of the volunteer services are high priority areas in hospital plan.