

PRESS RELEASE

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IRISH HOSPICE FOUNDATION MARKS WORLD HOSPICE AND PALLIATIVE CARE DAY - calls for equity in the development of the services -

On the first ever *World Hospice and Palliative Care Day* (Saturday, October 8th), the Irish Hospice Foundation has called for more investment in hospice and palliative care services in Ireland.

Hundreds of events are being organised in about 60 countries worldwide on October 8th to promote understanding of the hospice philosophy and raise much needed funds for hospice services.

More than one million people worldwide die each week. But only a minority of dying people ever receive the support of hospice and palliative care services. It is reckoned that 100 million people worldwide could benefit from basic hospice or palliative care – 33 million people dying and 66 million family members and loved ones.

Almost 30,000 people die in Ireland each year and over 7,000 Irish people use hospice services in Ireland every year. With increased life expectancy, Ireland has an ageing population. The number of people over the age of 65 is expected to more than double between 1996 and 2031. These figures have significant implications for the provision of end-of-life care.

IHF Chief Executive, Eugene Murray, stated: *“Palliative care is hugely underdeveloped even in countries with otherwise advanced health care systems. Hospice and palliative care services in Ireland have expanded over the years. The recommendations of the National Advisory Committee on Palliative Care in 2001 were adopted as Government policy. But this policy needs to be translated into action and many recommendations of the report have yet to be introduced. We must look to the future and move beyond the current system of ad-hoc service provision. Hospice and palliative care should be available to all on an equitable basis.”*

Mr Murray pointed out that gaps remained in the system with a heavy reliance on voluntary funding and no consistency in the range of services offered throughout the country. There were also gaps in our information about the number of people, particularly children, with life-limiting illness who need support.

More ...

He concluded: *“Many challenges lie ahead for hospice and palliative care services including the development of culturally sensitive and appropriate caring services for ethnic minorities in Ireland. The demand for hospice care is growing. It needs to be extended to meet the needs of people with illnesses other than cancer. Our aim is to ensure that hospice care is available for anyone who wants to receive it. No one should have to face death without appropriate care and support. Given that more than 50% of people die in hospital settings, there is an immediate need for hospitals to adopt the hospice philosophy in their approach to care for people dying.”*

World Hospice and Palliative Care Day is being supported by Archbishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa who has stated: *“Every year, millions of people around the world living with a terminal illness suffer unnecessary pain and distress, either unaware of or unable to access the care they need. Good quality hospice and palliative care, which aims to meet the needs of the whole person, can and does provide an answer. This is an issue that affects literally everybody on this planet – we would all like our lives to end peacefully and comfortably.”*

In a statement, the former President of the European Parliament, Pat Cox, stated: *“World Hospice Day offers an opportunity to highlight issues of importance to the development of hospice care, especially in poorer regions. We need to create a context in which dying, death and bereavement can be developed as a matter of public concern and where the concept of ‘a good death’ is a valid aspect of social and public policy.”*

A series of events are taking place in Ireland to mark *World Hospice and Palliative Care Day* around October 8th including:

- A fundraising ‘Nearest-the-Pin’ competition in golf clubs countrywide;
- Performances by musical societies and choral groups as part of *Voices for Hospice* – the largest choral event in the world;
- Exhibitions on hospice and palliative care in some public libraries.

The Irish Hospice Foundation is a not-for-profit organisation which was set up in 1986 to promote support for the hospice philosophy.

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