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Health

Addressing the needs of the dying

Daily News

October 06 2006 at 08:01PM

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By Rivonia Naidu

Every South African has the right to palliative care, but very few receive it.

That is the strong message that hospices around the province have expressed in the build-up to the 2006 World Hospice and Palliative Care Day to be held on Saturday.

Thousands of people from over 70 countries around the world are expected to stage events to raise awareness, improve access to palliative care and to raise funds.

The day aims to celebrate and support hospice and palliative care around the world.

Speaking to the Daily News on Thursday, representatives from hospices around KwaZulu- Natal said many people who required genetic end-of-life care for terminal illnesses did not receive it.

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The vice-chairperson of the Hospice Association of KwaZulu-Natal, Peter Terry-Lloyd, emphasised that palliative care should not only be available to those who have alternatives to hospices.

"The main aim of palliative care is too make people comfortable when suffering," he said.

Terry-Lloyd said while the 19 hospices in KwaZulu-Natal affiliated to the association tried their very best to provide the finest care and treatment for their patients, it was difficult because hospices survived mainly on sponsorships from private companies and the public.

He said with the workload increasing in the last few years because of HIV and Aids and the many types of cancers that have developed, hospices have become under resourced and understaffed.

"There are some hospices that do get funding from health departments, but we seldom have the funds to source the most qualified staff to carry out duties and provide treatment," he said.

Public Relations Officer of Highway Hospice Lynn Walker said palliative care affirms life.

"The overall goal of palliative care is quality of life for the patient and family.

"Our focus this year is to make people within our community aware of the role of palliative care, and to change the perception that hospice is a building, this is not so," she said.

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Public Relations Officer at the Chatsworth Regional Hospice Association, Kogi Singh, said palliative care should be apart of South Africa's health service.

She said millions of people who desperately needed end-of-life-care did not receive it.

"Many of them will endure intense and unnecessary pain, with little or no access to pain-relieving drugs.

"For them, the only option is palliative care provided by non-governmental organisations such as hospices," she said.






► **This article was originally published on page 9 of Daily News on October 06, 2006**

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