

## CARING FOR THE TERMINALLY ILL: Palliative and hospice care



Palliative and hospice care were introduced in the western medical field decades ago. In Bangladesh, the concept is new, and lacks proper research and resources. While both hospice and palliative care aim to relieve pain and symptoms, the prognosis and goals of care frequently differ. Hospice is comfort care without the goal of curing; either the patient has run out of curative options or has decided against seeking treatment because the risks outweigh the benefits. Palliative care can be given with or without a desire to cure a condition.

### ASHIC Foundation — Caring for the young

The Foundation was established in 1994 after the untimely demise of Ashiq Husain Choudhury, son of Salma and Afzal Husain Choudhury. Ashiq was only 3 years old when he died of cancer after a year-long treatment in London. The efforts to treat their son still failed to save him, and the two were devastated. Regardless, they showed resolve to support Bangladeshi families in the same



situation. With that goal in mind, they founded — A Shelter for Helpless Ill Children (ASHIC) — to offer parents and children with cancer the necessary physical and emotional support. After more than

25 years, ASHIC is now regarded as a leading provider of paediatric oncology care in South Asia.

Dr Momena Begum, Visiting Paediatric Oncologist of ASHIC Foundation, says, "The journey from diagnosis to the end days, especially when it comes to a child, is harder for the parents because they are able to fully comprehend the situation."

She feels that as the pain in this journey is shared by both the child and parent, it is crucial to attend to both. ASHIC serves toward that purpose by providing 24/7 services, catering to various aspects of treatment.

"It is important to understand that when it comes to terminal illnesses, the care is not just physical but rather should cater to the emotional, spiritual,

and psychological aspects of the patient and the others involved," she added.

All human beings have the right to depart from the world without a heavy heart. Dr Sonia Khanom, also of ASHIC Foundation, shares this view and says, "Treatment should offer a personal connection between the patient and their caregivers to provide mental and physical relief. The facilities themselves should feel like one's own home."

Her statement alludes to the nurturing environment the palliative and hospice sector offers patients. It is a place for patients to laugh, cry, share their sorrows and make peace with their situation. In simple words, it is a safe space to give the patients and their families to alleviate their pain.

### Hospice Bangladesh — the first extensive palliative care centre for adults

Started in 2013, Hospice Bangladesh provides terminally ill patients with palliative and hospice services. Dr Shahinur Kabir, founder and consultant of Hospice Bangladesh sheds light on the importance of hospice and palliative care for adults.

He says, "In a world gradually becoming more and more individualistic, many of us are often reluctant to aid the elderly of the household. We might become impatient or have other responsibilities to cater to which take more priority."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 22

Claims amount  
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