

National Palliative Care Week 2020

Palliative Care Week ran from 31st May to 5th June and in conjunction with that Palliative Care Victoria celebrated workers with the 'Palliative Care, it's more than you think' campaign.

Barwon Health Clinical Nurse Consultant Melanie Davies's role involves looking after people who have a life-limiting illness in their home, helping manage



symptoms and providing end of life care.

"This is something way more than a job, it gives so much back," Ms Davies said.

"I think, as a whole, people still have the perception palliative care equals only end of life care and people access it only in the last weeks of life, but it's much more."

In some cases people received palliative care for years, she said. Ms Davies contributed a video to the campaign, sharing a story of using virtual reality to take a teenage brain cancer patient to Paris for her birthday.

PCV interim chief executive Annie Revell said the aim of sharing these stories was to highlight the importance of palliative care in the community, while promoting the meaningful ways in which palliative care changed people's lives.

Meet our Community Palliative Care Staff Members



Community Palliative Care Program
Social Worker – Alison McWhinney

I have been working as a Social Worker for far more years than I now care to remember and have worked predominately in the area of trauma both with adults and children and generally within in the Community setting; I have also worked in Oncology at the Barwon Health, working both in the ward and in the Andrew Love Cancer Centre for a 12 month period, some

years ago. I have been in this role at Community Palliative Care for 3 years and working 4 days per week. I find it difficult to define exactly what my role is due to the huge variation within it, however, after some pondering I have come to the conclusion that it is probably easiest to say that my role is to support patients and/or their families in whatever ways are required for them to be able to manage their current situation, sometimes this means providing therapeutic counselling, grief and loss support, supporting patients and their families to navigate complex systems such as the Legal system etc and advocacy for a patient or their family plays a big role for me. I also believe that my role certainly extends to supporting the Volunteers who do a brilliant job in working with patients and their families.

One aspect of my work that I am very passionate about is completing Advanced Care Directives which gives a patient a voice when they are no longer able to speak for themselves and allows family members to make decisions for their loved one with the knowledge that they are following the requests of that person. From my point of view as Social Worker, I find that spending time with a patient and their significant other to complete these

I am often told that working in Palliative Care must be very difficult and 'I don't know how you do it', however, for me, it is an area of work that I really love to work in and yes, on occasion, it can be difficult and sad but there are times of laughter and happiness, many of our patients have a wicked sense of humour which still shines and I love that. I am often in awe of how patients and their families work together, sometimes in very difficult situations. Finally, I work with a great bunch of Professionals who are compassionate and focussed on patient care as well as providing light relief when required, all of which is essential.

The Kindness Pandemic

Clinical Nurse Consultant Melanie Davies and Volunteer Co-ordinator Jen Walsh together with Dr Catherine Barrett, Founder of the Kindness Pandemic have launched a Grief and Loss campaign to support people grieving during COVID19 restrictions.

Dr Susan Palmer, Founder and CEO of Gather My Crew states that Grief during COVID can come in many forms. It may be due to the death of a loved one, the loss of a job, the forced separation from family, or the inability to celebrate important milestones. It can leave a person shocked, empty, numb, weepy, sad, angry guilty ... and often unable to reach out for help or identify the help they need. They appear stuck. Too overwhelmed by the situation they find themselves in to be able to coordinate the care they so desperately need.

As humans, when we see someone who is grieving and in pain, we naturally want to help. We say things like... 'Let me know how I can help' or 'reach out if I can do anything for you' or 'I am here if you need me'. However, while we say these things with the best intentions, we are not actually offering help. What we are doing is telling this shocked, empty, numb person that, if they want our help, *they* must identify what help is needed and *they* must reach out to ask for it. And when you are grieving...well...that is just too much.

At Gather My Crew, we want people who are grieving to get the help they really need.

After Someone Dies

Current COVID19 restrictions mean family and friends can't travel to support each other or be present at a memorial service. So Mel, Jen and the team have developed templates that can be shared as a post on social media. Here is an example of some words that can be used.

"We wanted to let you all know that [write the name of the person who has died here] has died. Our hearts are broken. We are missing the opportunity to grieve with you because of COVID19 restrictions and we would greatly appreciate your messages of support. You are invited to support us in the comments section of this post by: sharing a photograph or a poem or prayer; telling us about how you met, share a picture or some art, make a short film and share it, light a candle and share an image of the candle. This support means a lot to us. Thankyou"

Also artist Prue Clay has provided three beautiful images that can be used for the post. The picture below is one of those images. You can find this information and more at -

<https://www.thekindnesspandemic.org/grief.html>

