

# Death Literacy for a Public Health Palliative Care Approach in Brunei

Chandra Kant Rai<sup>1</sup>, Shyh Poh Teo<sup>1,2\*</sup> and Hanif Rahman<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>PAPRSB Institute of Health Sciences, Universiti Brunei Darussalam, Brunei Darussalam

<sup>2</sup>Geriatrics and Palliative Medicine, Department of Internal Medicine, RIPAS Hospital, Brunei Darussalam

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\*Corresponding author: shyhpoh.teo@moh.gov.bn

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*Dear Editor,*

We read with interest the Editorial entitled ‘Dealing with death and dying in medicine’ by Ng and Lee,<sup>1</sup> which outlined useful strategies for clinicians to cope with caring for dying patients, including normalizing conversations about death, and developing robust psychological support systems. These strategies can be extended as public health approaches for palliative care to build compassionate and competent communities for End-of-Life (EOL) care. An important component is death literacy, which is the knowledge and skills needed to make informed decisions about EOL care. Death literacy is essential to develop effective EOL care strategies and support systems, reduce fears associated with dying, and improve palliative care for individuals and their caregivers.<sup>2</sup>

Brunei's increasing ageing population and significant burden of non-communicable diseases underscores the need for preventative measures, health literacy, and patient empowerment for self-management to reduce disease progression. As part of the continuum of health services for advanced diseases, palliative and supportive care services should also be strengthened, including promotion of death literacy in the community.<sup>3</sup> Brunei has a predominantly Muslim population with deep religious and spiritual practices, which may be associated with death literacy. However, there is limited research on death literacy rates.

A cross-sectional survey is proposed to assess death literacy among older people in Brunei, by exploring their beliefs, attitudes, knowledge, and experiences regarding death and dying. This will utilize a death literacy index that includes factual knowledge, experiential learning, practical understanding, and community capacity.<sup>4</sup> Community residents will be recruited for participation, and data analysis will identify patterns and correlations in death literacy within this population. It is hoped that its findings will inform healthcare policies, practices, and educational initiatives to improve EOL experiences and advance sustainable development goals for older people in Brunei.

## References

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