

Plenary Lecture

A good death

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By nature, we contemplate on living rather than dying. However, death is the inevitable end to all of us. Death is an inherent attribute of life. Modern medicine seems to implicitly suggest that it could defeat death and hence, death is seen as a failure rather than as an important part of life. In our obsession to cure disease, we tend to develop a nihilistic attitude towards patients with terminal illness, abandoning them in their hour of need. The dying are left feeling isolated and totally unprepared for death. Just as one wishes for a good life, it is natural to wish for a good death. Health care providers must have formal training in caring for the dying, should be aware of the principles of a good death and must be sensitive to the physical, psychosocial and spiritual needs of the individual and the family. Individuals and families need to contemplate on how they would like to depart and feel reassured that their health care providers are well equipped to deliver the care conducive to a good death.