

## **Compassionate Healing: Dancing with the Patients and the Caregivers at End Stage of Life**

**Background:** Many cancer patients in mainland China cannot achieve a “good death” partly due to widespread perceptions about death and cultural taboos. Some research has documented Chinese peoples’ expectations of good death generally, but few studies have explored Chinese perceptions of good death specifically regarding cancer.

**Methods:** A qualitative, semi-structured interview study was conducted among oncological physicians, nurses, cancer patients and families. Four groups were recruited from a regional public cancer hospital in Beijing using comprehensive sampling. Interviews were recorded, transcribed and independently analyzed by two investigators using phenomenological analysis to derive a rich description of what constitutes a good death.

**Results:** Interviews were conducted among 15 physicians, 15 nurses, 12 patients and 10 family members. Five core themes emerged: no suffering, family acceptance, effective communication and better care, closure, and preparedness. Family restrictions over clinician-patient communications significantly impede improved communications care, and urgently need resolving nationwide.

**Conclusions:** This framework for understanding good death in mainland China may also apply to Chinese diaspora globally. Though patient suffering was addressed, families in particular need more preparation, emotional support and expressed concern. Improving communication is a critical task for clinical staff seeking to develop better end-of-life care for Chinese patients.