

The need for palliative care continues to grow

By: [Cheryl Girard](#)

Posted: 05/15/2017 12:06 PM

Mike Goldberg learned at a very young age how crucial support can be when someone is seriously ill or dying.

"When I was seven years old, my sister, who was 22 months younger than me, was diagnosed with cancer. I was in Grade 2. I was sitting at my desk thinking about my sister, I just froze, became paralyzed and I started crying," Goldberg said.

A guidance counsellor came, got down on one knee and just listened, Goldberg remembered.

"It was such a moving experience to me to have that support."

Many years later, Goldberg said, the same guidance counsellor was one of the first volunteers he worked with at Palliative Manitoba.

A community outreach and education co-ordinator at Palliative Manitoba, Goldberg was one of four speakers at a palliative care panel discussion held recently at St. Joseph's Ukrainian Catholic Church in conjunction with Respect Life Week.

Palliative Manitoba, Goldberg said, "provides complementary support services to the health care system."

A volunteer-based, charitable agency, Palliative Manitoba provides volunteer support, grief seminars and more to Manitobans affected by any life-threatening or life-limiting illness.

Dr. Mary Shariff, associate professor of law at the U of M, shared a legal perspective and statistics related to the number of recent assisted deaths across Canada.

Government statistics from December 2015 to December 2016, Shariff said, indicate that there have been 970 assisted deaths during that period.

"This is only up to 2016 so the numbers are much higher now," she added.

Dr. Chantal Demers, a palliative care consultant with the Winnipeg Regional Health Authority presented information on the WRHA palliative care program.

"It's still patchwork quilt," she said. "Unfortunately palliative care is only really available to about 16 to 30 per cent of the Canadian population... so there is work to be done."

"There's a big push for more hospice beds... we are really 'under-numbered' for what we need here in Manitoba." Demers also said that as Baby Boomers become seniors the issue of palliative care provision is not going away. Fr. Dmytro Dnistrian, pastor at St. Joseph's, addressed the topic from a spiritual perspective and spoke of his many years of ministering to those who are suffering or dying.

We live in a society, Dmytro said, "that is influenced not always in a good way by technology and a society that is influenced to avoid the reality of an earthly journey... We must acknowledge that as human beings we will suffer at one time or another, we are not immune but we shouldn't be afraid..."

For more info on Palliative Manitoba, call 204-889-8525 or visit palliativemanitoba.ca

For info on the WRHA palliative care program, phone 204-237-2400 or visit www.wrha.mb.ca/prog/palliative/