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Children Grieve too: a Story Telling for Health Professionals Grief Awareness Week – 24 to 30 August

Hope Healthcare's specialist Palliative Care Services focussed on the needs of children who have a member of their family dying, during Grief Awareness Week (week's theme: *Acknowledging Loss - Promoting Resilience*)

To highlight children's needs, we held a Children's Story Telling with a difference - a Story Telling for Health Professionals. As part of training sessions on this subject for our specialised staff, our Bereavement Coordinator Sue Hearn read to staff, extracts from resource materials and books intended to assist children deal with death and dying.

According to Sue Hearn we are a society that tries to deny the reality of death and this is especially true where children are involved. "As parents, grandparents and caring adults we try to protect and guide our children when difficulties arise. When someone in our family is dying we are all very concerned about what effect this may have on the children. Sometimes we try to protect them by not telling them what is happening or speak in euphemisms, to soften the blow."

"Children are resilient and often they are more aware than we give them credit for. However, children can become fearful when caring adults are not truthful with them."

Sue said that we can do a number of things to help children at these times. "Children need honesty and clear information and answers to their questions. Information needs to be given in a way that they can understand. For example talk about their feelings; they may need reassurance that they will be looked after, that they did not do anything to cause the illness or death. Involving children in funerals and other rituals can be useful too."

"Death is something that can be explained clearly and gently to any child and no one can do it better than family."

Help is available through Hope Healthcare's Bereavement service. We have assembled a collection of resources and books for children, adolescents, families and health professionals made possible through donations in memory of Michael & Jeanne Ercole. Some material is available for loan and we can assist in other ways, through counselling and support.

Contact: Sue Hearn Bereavement Coordinator on 9903 8333

Sydney 22 August 2008

*For more information ☎ Robert Britton on mobile 0418 260 476, 9903 8133 or e-mail
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