

PRESS RELEASE
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'No hospice beds in South East' Irish Hospice Foundation CEO tells Kilkenny meeting

There is not one hospice bed in the South East, despite massive voluntary effort to raise funds for palliative care facilities and services in the region, Eugene Murray, CEO of the Irish Hospice Foundation told the audience at a hospice information and awareness night at the Ormonde Hotel, Kilkenny on Wednesday night. Entitled 'Hospice Care in Ireland', the Susie Long Hospice Fund had arranged the night as part of its Hospice Week activities, which seek to raise funds and increase awareness and understanding of hospice care in Ireland. The meeting was also addressed by Dr Emmet Walls, Palliative Care Consultant for the South East and was chaired by Dr Pat Crowley, MD.

Both guest speakers agreed that end-of-life care is expensive but could provide a vast number of examples from various sources within Europe and further a-field to prove that care within a hospice is less expensive than other options.

Eugene Murray told the meeting: "We can prove it saves money. We can save the health services money and we can save hospital money." He went on to cite a number of international examples which showed that specialist palliative care units reduce hospital costs by anything from 20% to 67% in some cases. "The evidence is overwhelming", he stated.

Dr Emmet Walls praised the work of the Homecare Team in Kilkenny in their work with people facing their end-of-life at home, but both speakers pointed out that this service is for cancer patients only. Dr Walls said that one in three people will get cancer, one in four will die from cancer and the other three will die from something else, so provision of hospice care is really for everyone.

Both speakers said that while the HSE and government policy on the issue was ideal, the reality especially in Kilkenny, Carlow, Waterford and Wexford was not, despite excellent homecare teams operating mainly by voluntary donation. There is still not one hospice bed in the region.

Both speakers encouraged The Susie Long Hospice Fund to seek to drive things on from approval for a hospice at policy level towards becoming a reality, and to continue the work they have been doing, raising funds and awareness of the need for hospice care in Kilkenny. The Fund has raised €148,000 in the 11 months of its existence.

The Susie Long Hospice Fund (SLHF) was set up in October 2007 to provide the highest possible quality of end-of-life care for patients and their families through the establishment of a 10-bed hospice in Kilkenny. The Fund plans to meet this challenge through fundraising, increasing awareness of the need and benefits of local hospice care and by lobbying Government for support. Donations can be made directly to the fund at AIB, High St, Kilkenny, Account no: 3462705, Sort code: 93-31-98 The Susie Long Hospice Fund is a registered charity, number CHY17950.

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