

DAME CICELY SAUNDERS

Founder of the palliative and hospice care modern movement



This week is a special one in itself as we celebrate powerful, strong, passionate and empathetic women on International Women's Week. We at OpusCare feel especially fortunate and excited to celebrate because our organization would not exist as is if it weren't for one woman's vision. Dame Cicely Saunders, a nurse who dedicated her life to the palliative and hospice modern movement, changed the way we saw and treated the end of life.

Saunders was an exemplary woman, with an educational record that only added to her already impressive mark in our history books. As a young woman she was educated at Roedean School and St. Anne's College Oxford, where she left to study nursing at St. Thomas' Hospital during World War II. Once the war ended, she would return to

Oxford to complete her degree in Public and Social Administration and later became a Lady Almoner, or chaplain.

She developed an interest in palliative care early on while she worked as a hospice volunteer nurse and assisted with the care of patients who were suffering from terminal illnesses. She felt there was something missing with the system in place. In her vision, there could be a better way to administer pain

control, addressing the patients' "total pain." She felt the suffering could be made easier, including for the family members of the patients, and dreamed of helping bring peace to patients and their families during this difficult time. She soon realized, though, that

her ideas would not be accepted without a medical degree. A resolute young woman, Saunders soon became a doctor, earning her medical degree at St. Thomas' Medical school in 1957. The following year, she graciously accepted a research scholarship by the Hallet Stewart Trust to explore and trial new methods of pain management for the terminally ill at St. Joseph's Hospice in London.

About 10 years later, Saunders founded St. Christopher's, the first hospital specialized in research and teaching of hospice

care, expert pain and symptom management, compassionate care, education and clinical research. She developed the model for hospice care as we know it today and pioneered the decision to recognize Palliative Care as a new specialty in the medical field.

For 34 years, she was the Medical Director, Chairman of the Board and Founder/President of St. Christopher's Hospice. She is widely recognized as the founder of modern



Dame Cicely Saunders
1918 - 2005

hospice programs.

Dame Cicely's writings are an important historical record of the modern hospice movement. She was truly passionate about her mission. She strived to not only make a difference in her community but to change the way the world treated the terminally ill. We stand firmly by her mission, leading our work with one goal in mind, our patients, and their family's comfort. **OpusCare** is dedicated to providing patients and their families excellence in palliative care and support services when faced with a terminal illness. We provide a customized individual program where "Dignity Care" is our number one priority.

We feel that this mirrors Saunder's own mission, as she states, "You matter because you are you, and you matter to the end of your life. We will do all we can not only to help you die peacefully, but also to live until you die."

As an organization devoted to providing COMFORT and QUALITY care during one of the most challenging times in a person's life, we feel honored to follow the footsteps of an exceptional woman. May her legacy live on and only get stronger through devotion, compassion, love for human life and dedication to educating our communities about palliative and hospice care.



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By: Carolina Armas Bustamante, Executive Vice President