

**AUTHOR'S REPLY**

It was a delight to discover colleagues in another tertiary paediatric centre in Singapore (within a restructured hospital) showing interest in the welfare of dying children. Please allow me to share a few comments on their report.<sup>(1)</sup>

It is commendable that the authors have rigorously evaluated data over such a long period. The inclusion and exclusion criteria were almost similar to those from our previous study.<sup>(2)</sup> Our study had included children who were less than four weeks old, albeit a small number (five out of a total of 68 children). In spite of this, the types of conditions and their relative prevalence are remarkably similar.

The authors have highlighted an interesting finding that was also noted in our previous study, i.e. the other races seemed to be over-represented above the Chinese. We were unable to provide any reason for this. Verification of any association between a particular race and increased childhood mortality was limited by study design.

What was pertinently pointed out by our colleagues in their report was the preponderance of congenital anomalies among the mortalities. Similar to adults, palliative care in children all over the world has evolved from the support of those with advanced incurable cancers. However, the large numbers with congenital anomalies suggest that these patients have significant needs that can also benefit from the holistic, family-centred and inter-disciplinary model of care in palliative medicine.

The discourse on infections has again raised the importance of advanced care planning (ACP), which we proposed in our original paper. Most of these children die suddenly or unexpectedly. Thus, ACP ensures that the wishes and hopes of both the young patients and their families are acknowledged, whether sanctioning a course of management or setting the limits of treatment. This is so that undue suffering is prevented, especially when the burdens of care outweigh the benefits.

I thank the authors for flagging up once again the hidden issues behind many families who are still mourning the young ones whom they have lost.

Yours sincerely,  
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**REFERENCES**

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