

<b>CareSearch Project</b> <b>Research Studies Register: Registration Proforma</b>	<b>0093</b>
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**Study Title: Evaluation of a volunteer-based client biography service**

**Brief description of the study:**

Client biography is a new palliative care program using trained volunteers to help dying people record their life stories and personal tributes. Since 2006, over 200 Eastern Palliative Care clients have participated in the program - rapid growth in client and volunteer demand means that research is needed to qualify anecdotal support for this program.

This study aimed to explore the experience of biography for palliative clients, their family, volunteer biographers and professional palliative care staff. A mixed methods triangulation approach was taken with SPSS and nVIVO analyses.

Review of the international literature found this volunteer-based program to be unique, addressing key limitations of life story work (eg. time & resources, professional power differential, training & support, and ethical privacy).

The study found high levels of satisfaction among clients and family, and this was supported by staff ratings of client comments about the program. All professional staff said that biography *does* in fact make a unique contribution to the quality of life of their clients. Qualitative analysis found that the biography process can amplify the benefits associated with life review and personal growth (eg. reintegration/resolution of one's experiences etc). Families have lasting memories of their loved ones, providing deeper insights, enhancing communication, healing relationships and supporting grief and bereavement. Implications for a peaceful death are discussed in relation to health promoting palliative care approaches.

This volunteer-based program uniquely addresses the great need to leave a tangible legacy - normalising death, and valuing the lived experience of the dying. Enriching current psychosocial and spiritual supports, it is a valuable and innovative person-centred complement to the suite of holistic palliative care services that can strengthen links with community.

**Study Methodology: (Please mark with an x which type of study methodology)**

<b>X</b>	<b>Qualitative, Observational or Descriptive</b>
<b>X</b>	<b>Mixed Method</b>
<b>X</b>	<b>Systematic Review</b>

**Project details:**

**Funding source (Optional):** Health Chaplaincy of Victoria (HCCVI)

<b>Has the study received ethics approval?</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>Yes</b>		<b>No</b>	<b>Not applicable</b>
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**Project starting date:** 20/04/2008

**Project completion date:** 20/04/2009

<b>Multi site:</b>		Yes	<b>X</b>	No	Not applicable
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**RESEARCHERS**

Principal Investigator (name) **Mr Francis Icasiano**

Contact Details [Francis.icasiano@consultant.com](mailto:Francis.icasiano@consultant.com)

0419 900 321

**Associated publications / reports:**

Presentation at PCA Conference Perth, 2009

<http://www.palliativecare.org.au/Portals/46/Together%20conference/B11%20Francis%20Icasiano.pdf>

**Topics: Families, Patients, Social Support**