PMAC 2026 Side Meeting	When Societies Grow Older: Designing Health Systems that Honor Life, Death, Meaning, and the Spiritual Dimension of Care
Side Meeting Code	SMB222
Date/Time	Tuesday, January 27, 2026, 2:00–6:00 p.m. (4 hours)
Venue	Lotus Suite 7, Level 22, Centara Grand & Bangkok Convention Centre at CentralWorld, Bangkok, Thailand

<u>Host</u>

- Thai Health Promotion Foundation (ThaiHealth)
- Knowledge Center and Coordination on Spiritual Health

<u>Co-host</u>

- Soul Connect Fest Network
- Peaceful Death
- Compassionate Communities Research and Development Institution Foundation
- Cheevamitr Social Enterprise
- Karunrak Palliative Care Center, Srinagarind Hospital, Faculty of Medicine, Khon Kaen University
- Xavier Spiritual and Leadership Development Center (SLDC)
- Puey Ungphakorn School of Development Studies, Thammasat University
- JitArsa Volunteer Development Bank (JitArsa Bank)
- Buddhika Network Foundation
- International Health Policy Program Foundation (IHPP Foundation)
- National Health Commission Office (NHCO)
- Society and Health Institute (SHI)
- Mindfulness Psychology (Social Enterprise) Co., Ltd.

Background and Rationale

Across the world, we are living through one of the most profound demographic transitions in human history. Advances in modern medicine have successfully extended life expectancy, while birth rates continue to decline, pushing many societies into an aging era. Yet longer lives do not always mean better lives. For many older adults, especially in the final stages of life, these extra years are often accompanied by chronic illness, vulnerability, loneliness, and emotional disconnection — challenges that our current systems are not fully prepared to hold with care.

Many people today continue their final journey carrying unseen suffering — fear, uncertainty, a sense of being a burden, or a quiet belief that their worth has faded. Meanwhile, care systems often focus on prolonging life rather than honoring the meaning, dignity, and inner world of the person. As a result, far too many lives end in isolation, even when the heart still longs to be understood, to reconcile, to express love, or simply to be accompanied with presence.

This is not only a matter of medical treatment. It is about how we, as societies, design systems that care for life, and systems that care for death.

A compassionate death system includes knowledge, communication, decision-making, supportive relationships, meaningful rituals, and spaces that uphold dignity and choice — allowing people to leave this world in the way their heart wishes.

At the same time, spiritual health, often overlooked, is essential to whole-person care. It embraces meaning, hope, peace, forgiveness, belonging, and connection with something deeper than the physical body. When this dimension is absent, care remains incomplete, especially at the end of life — where the deepest questions are not medical, but existential.

Equity is also a critical concern. Not everyone has the same opportunity to choose how, where, and with whom they spend their final moments. Access to palliative care, spiritual support, and compassionate presence still depends heavily on socioeconomic status, geography, culture, and available services. Yet a good death should be a basic human right — not a privilege.

Palliative care and hospice services offer pathways to return humanity to care, through compassionate communication, deep listening, emotional and spiritual support, and creating space for peaceful, meaningful endings. Compassionate Communities further remind us that dying is not solely the responsibility of health

professionals — it is a shared human responsibility, where families, communities, and society collectively accompany one another toward the final threshold.

This session invites policymakers, system leaders, practitioners, communities, and lived-experience voices to imagine a future where longer lives are not only medically possible, but emotionally meaningful, spiritually supported, and equitably honored — where we build not only systems that sustain life, but also systems that embrace death with dignity, love, and collective compassion.

> In a world where we live longer,
> may we also learn to live deeper, care wiser, and let go with grace.
> A good death should belong to everyone.
> And spiritual peace is the final beauty of being human.

Objectives

1. To create a shared learning and reflection space that deepens collective understanding of care for aging populations, particularly the integration of emotional, spiritual, and dignity-centered perspectives across the continuum of life and end-of-life care.

2. To exchange experiences, insights, and promising practices from health systems, community initiatives, practitioners, caregivers, patients, and families across different cultural and social contexts, in order to broaden what is possible and learn from diverse real-world settings.

3. To explore potential directions and co-design pathways for integrating Spiritual Health and Death System concepts into aging care policies, models of service, and community-based approaches, ensuring that the needs of older adults are met with compassion, meaning, and fairness.

4. To seed future collaboration and multi-sector partnerships by identifying shared interests, potential pilot initiatives, learning networks, and cross-disciplinary cooperation that may continue beyond this side meeting.

Programme

PMAC Registration (Level 22)

12:30-13:30 **Lunch**

13:00–13:45 **Side Meeting Registration and Headset Collection (SMB222, Lotus Suite 7)**

14:00–14:05 **Opening and Welcome by Master of Ceremonies**

- Sorrayut Ratanapojnard, Ph.D.

Co-founder, JitArsa Bank, Thailand

- Wiset Bumrungwong

Head of Talent Development, JitArsa Bank, Thailand

14:05–14:15 **Guided Contemplative Practice on Life and Mortality**

- Yongyud Wongpiromsarn, M.D.

Committee Chairman, Mindfulness Psychology (Social Enterprise) Co., Ltd.

14:15-14:25 **Opening Address: Vision for Compassionate End-of-Life Care**

- Pongthep Wongwatcharapaiboon, M.D.

Chief Executive Officer, Thai Health Promotion Foundation, Thailand

14:25–14:30 **Group Photo**

Keynote Sessions

14:30–14:50 **Keynote Address I (Video Presentation)**

Good Death, Good Life: Whole-Person Care Beyond Disease

- Libby Sallnow, Ph.D.

Associate Professor and Head, Marie Curie Palliative Care Research,

University College London, United Kingdom

Lead Author, *The Lancet Commission on the Value of Death* (2022)

14:50–15:10 **Keynote Address II**

When We All Care: Supporting Living and Dying Well in Compassionate Communities

- Kerrie Noonan, Ph.D.

Director, Death Literacy Institute;

Adjunct Associate Professor, Public Health Palliative Care, La Trobe University, Australia

15:10–15:25 **Coffee Break**

Interactive Dialogue

15:25–17:25 *Rehumanizing Care in Aging Societies* **(Fishbowl Discussion)**

Facilitators

- Kerrie Noonan, Ph.D.

Director, Death Literacy Institute;

Adjunct Associate Professor, Public Health Palliative Care, La Trobe University, Australia

- Sakon Singha, M.D., Ph.D.

Consultant, Palliative Care Center, Songklanagarind Hospital,

Prince of Songkla University, Thailand

Participants

- **Inner Circle: Invited participants initiating the dialogue**

- Khun Ying Chamnongsri Hanchanlash

Founding Director, Cheevamitr Social Enterprise (End-of-Life Care), Thailand

- Srivieng Phairojkul, M.D.

Associate Professor and Head, Karunrak Palliative Care Center,

Srinagarind Hospital, Faculty of Medicine, Khon Kaen University, Thailand

- Wanna Jarusomboon

President, Compassionate Communities Research and Development Institution

Foundation; President, Peaceful Death Group, Thailand

- Ekkapop Sittiwantana

Advocate, Educator, and Policy Researcher in Public Health Palliative Care, Thailand

- **Open Circle: PMAC participants and contributors from across sectors are warmly welcomed to join the dialogue and share their perspectives.**

17:25–17:35 **Shared Reflection (Facilitated)**

- Wirun Limsawart, M.D., Ph.D.

Director, Society and Health Institute (SHI), Thailand

17:35–17:45 **Closing Reflection**

17:45–17:55 **Guided Contemplative Practice for Collective Dedication**

- Yongyud Wongpiromsarn, M.D.

Committee Chairman, Mindfulness Psychology (Social Enterprise) Co., Ltd.

17:55–18:00 **Acknowledgements and Farewell**

- Yanee Rajtborirak

Director, Healthy Media System and Spiritual Health Promotion Section,

Thai Health Promotion Foundation, Thailand