

SOCIAL WORK/COUNSELLING at ADSSA

The Social Work and Counselling service at ADSSA provides counselling, information and support (at an individual/couple/group level) for people who have asbestos-related diseases and their families and carers to help them maintain a sense of wellbeing and quality of life.

Our social worker has spent 32 years working in a variety of hospital and community settings, and is aware of the importance of good, psychological care, as clients and their families adjust to their diagnoses and forms of treatment.

Timely counselling can improve the wellbeing of the client and carer. It allows them the opportunity to discuss their feelings about complex and sensitive psycho-social issues. Below are some examples of the feelings and issues I can assist with:

EMOTIONAL - feelings of fear, helplessness, anxiety, anger, tearfulness are appropriate and understandable responses to the diagnosis and treatment.

FAMILY- offering partners and couple's support, assisting with carer's stress, and discussing the effects of the diagnosis and illness on family relationships.

PSYCHOLOGICAL - self-esteem, autonomy, and change in body-image, can all be affected by the disease. Sexuality and intimacy can be sensitively addressed. As the disease progresses, confronting one's mortality, meaning of life and spirituality becomes an imperative.

PRACTICAL - concerns about the cost of travel, accommodation, allied health, loss of income, naming of Power of Attorney, making of a Will, can all impact on the well-being of the client and carer.

The sense of loss is a common theme in all these issues. It is the subtle, intangible, symbolic losses that social workers commonly encounter in their work, for example: the loss of dreams and aspirations, loss of familiar roles, loss of independence.

The response to such losses is an emotion called grief, an amalgam of painful feelings, including sadness, anger, helplessness, guilt and despair. The social worker needs to explore with the client and carer, the pervasive effects of this loss and help them to understand this grief and loss and make the necessary adjustments to their life's expectations.

Penny Jacomos SOCIAL WORKER