

Gold Standards Framework Centre Visit to China

We are the guests of Professor K K Cheng along with teams from Health Education England, including its Chief Executive, Professor Ian Cumming, and Birmingham University, including the Vice Dean, Professor Kate Thomas. The hospitality and courtesy we have received here have been wonderful.

On Tuesday we visited Desheng Health Centre, from where 30 GPs serve a population of 120,000. Its palliative care hospice department was good and has a smallish cancer focused model of health care for a few hundred patients but otherwise it was like a GP surgery with all the latest technology. We led a seminar in the afternoon introducing ageing population based End of Life Care thinking. The concept of Primary Care has only developed in the last 10 years, and over 90 per cent of people expect to die in hospital.

On Wednesday we led an all-day conference on End of Life Care at Peking University where Keri spoke about population based thinking, non-cancer models and the need to address End of Life Care urgently. There was input from some local doctors about their understanding of the future needs in End of Life Care in China and Julie Armstrong - Wilson and I spoke about Advance Care Planning, compassionate care, cultural spiritual differences, using our humanity and the importance of this work. The audience was over 100 rising to 150 at times, mostly medical and some media. When asked, they nearly all stated that they would prefer to die at home but expected to die in hospital. The concept of Advance Care Planning is very foreign to them. When talking about a patient's wishes, all the family would expect to be involved and it is the family who gives consent not the patient. They all find talking about death very difficult, and asked for communications skills training, how to tell the truth sensitively. They know one of their biggest challenges is to grow, develop and train good community Primary Care to serve the huge and ageing population in rural and urban areas.

Thursdays signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between the two countries is significant in meeting this challenge as we share all we have learnt in our journey in the UK over the last 10 years. There were speakers from Peking University, the Chinese Health Ministry, Birmingham University and Health Education England.

We at the National GSF Centre are very excited because we feel that our time has come in helping both countries meet the challenges of ageing populations and multi-morbidities. 1 in 3 of those born today in the UK will live to be 100. It was good to be here as part of the UK delegation and we hope to follow this up, and maybe to help develop more thinking on End of Life Care, last years of life care.