***Appendix 1.***

***Programme for seminar series on support in an existential crisis:***

*How can we understand ourselves and others and how can we strengthen ourselves and support others?*

**1. Introduction**

* Existential issues and existential philosophy.
* Which questions are existential in nature?
* Irving Yalom’s thoughts about existential challenges.
* Existential issues, spirituality and religion – similarities and differences.
* Why an incurable disease raises existential issues.
* Border situations (boundary situations).

Issues for reflection

*During the first seminar we talked about different border situations. Have you experienced a border situation yourself? Which existential issues were raised? What was considered supportive in that situation?*

**2. Crisis, coping and support**

* What is the general nature of a crisis?
* What characterizes an existential crisis?
* Why does an incurable disease trigger an existential crisis?
* Changes (physical, psychological, social and existential) associated with an incurable disease.
* What is coping?
* The coping process. The development of coping strategies and how we use them in emotionally and existentially challenging situations.
* Why is coping with one’s own impending death such a unique experience?
* Sören Kierkegaard´s thoughts about support.

Issues for reflection

*The theme for our second seminar was crisis and coping. What kind of coping strategies do you use yourself? Try to recall an emotionally and/ or existentially demanding situation and remember your thoughts. What did you do to make the situation manageable? If you felt sad, where did you search for consolation and what did you do to create confidence/ security?*

**3. Death anxiety and loneliness**

* What characterizes death anxiety?
* Differences between fear and anxiety.
* Coping with separation, loneliness and extinction.
* Existential isolation and how it differs from other forms of loneliness.
* The human need for relationships and connectedness.

Issues for reflection

*The third seminar was about death anxiety. Try to imagine that you are the person who is dying. What do you think would be the most demanding challenge for you – uncertainty, reaching closure and saying goodbye, loneliness or your impending demise?*

**4. Hopelessness, meaninglessness,and suffering**

* Hopelessness and meaninglessness.
* The meaning of suffering.
* Suffering as a phenomenon.
* The human need for hope and meaning.
* Viktor Frankl’s thoughts about meaning.

Issues for reflection

*Meaning and meaninglessness were the subjects of seminar number four. Make a list, short or long, of what is of real importance in your own life right now. Do you think that having an incurable disease would change the list? If so, how?*

**5. Freedom, responsibility and guilt**

* To have and to endure freedom.
* How freedom and responsibility interlock.
* The same question about freedom and guilt.
* How is one’s freedom and responsibility affected by an incurable disease?
* To assume responsibility and to have responsibilities to someone or something.
* Next of kins’ caring responsibilities.
* When children and young adults are next-of-kin.

Issues for reflection

*When we last met we talked about freedom, responsibility and guilt and we noted that many next-of-kin take great responsibility in palliative care. Give some thoughts to your own responsibility and what it entails.*

*What is the difference between taking responsibility for and having responsibilities to?*

**6 and 7.The coping process of meaning-making in the context of one´s own impending death and how it can be supported by others**

* The coping process in the context of one’s own impending death, repetition and summary.
* How can we support another person’s coping process of meaning-making?
* Aaron Antonovsky’s theory about SOC (Sense of Coherence).
* Confidence as a necessity for human growth.
* How can we convey confidence?
* How does it affect someone to work in the proximity of death?
* The important mirror neurons and issues of empathy and sympathy.
* How can we as staff continue to be empathic and still take care of ourselves?