



## The 10th Palliative Care Congress

**12<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> March 2014**

**The Harrogate International Centre, Harrogate**

### **Invited Speaker Abstract**

**Date** Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> March  
**Time** 0830 - 0930  
**Session** Masterclass  
**Speakers** Dr Bridget Taylor  
Dr Isabel White

#### **Supporting sexual intimacy in palliative care**

Sexual intimacy is the means by which individuals and couples communicate affection, love and the expression of desire. This core human need is frequently disrupted in life-limiting illness, which challenges the way people see themselves and those with whom they have relationships.

A key aim of palliative care is to support patients to live as actively as possible until their death and to support those that are significant to them. It would therefore seem reasonable to expect that support for individuals experiencing changes in their intimate or sexual relationships is included. However, research and clinical experience show that the sexual needs of people with life-limiting illness, and their partners, remain unmet.

This workshop draws on Sternberg's (1986) theory of love and considers the inter-relationship between intimacy, commitment and sexual desire to consider how practitioners might respond to changing relationship dynamics within the context of illness and loss. Those who attend the workshop will have the opportunity to:

- Discuss the impact of life-limiting conditions on sexual expression and relationship dynamics for individuals and couples
- Explore the barriers to addressing psychosexual issues in palliative care
- Explore ways of providing patients and partners with 'permission' to talk about their need for intimacy or any sexual concerns, if they want to
- Identify practical strategies for professional practice at an individual and organisational level