



Palliative Care in Cancer

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What is Palliative Care?

- **Palliative care is providing comfort and support to any person who is experiencing a serious illness**
- **Symptom management**
- **Understanding and addressing the patient's wishes and goals**
- **Care can be provided at any time from the initial diagnosis**
- **Care is provided by experts with experience, and may include doctors, nurses, physical therapists, dietitians, hospital chaplains, psychologists, and social workers**
- **It is care with the goal of improving a patient's (and in turn, the family) *quality of life***

Who is Eligible to Receive Palliative Care?

- 1) Adults with serious, life-threatening diseases or conditions**
- 2) Newborns, infants, older children and adults with conditions requiring dependence on life-sustaining treatment**
- 3) Newborns, infants, older children and adults with disabilities who develop serious illness**
- 4) Any individual with an acute (recent onset) condition (for example, trauma accident) which cause significant burden**
- 5) Terminally ill patients**
- 6) Patients from vulnerable, underserved, or poorly resourced communities who develop serious illness**

What are the Goals of Palliative Care?

- 1) Addressing and managing the typical symptoms of cancer such as nausea, pain, discomfort, difficulty breathing, lack of appetite, and sleep difficulty**
- 2) Treating a patient's emotional difficulties, such as fear, anxiety, and uncertainty**
- 3) Assisting the patient with relationships with family, caregivers and friends**
- 4) Providing support and comfort for the patient's family, friends, and caregivers**
- 5) Helping patients make important decisions Addressing the spiritual needs of patients, if so desired**
- 6) Helping with daily chores and issues related to the illness, such as providing rides**
- 7) Helping manage the financial difficulties of chronic or sever illness**
- 8) Addressing certain legal concerns of care**

What is the Difference Between Palliative Care and Hospice Care?

- While both palliative care and hospice care are intended to provide support for person's with severe illness, there are major differences between the two entities:

PARAMETER	<i>Palliative Care</i>	<i>Hospice Care</i>
How Common?	Not common	Very common
Site of care?	Usually provided at a healthcare facility	Usually provided at home
Who performs the work?	Almost all work performed by healthcare professionals	Relies more on the family caregiver, with assistance from healthcare personnel
When is it provided?	Can be provided at any time in the illness; need not be "terminally ill"	Usually provided when life expectancy is less than 6 months
Does insurance cover the care?	Since provided in a healthcare facility, usually covered by health insurance, including Medicare and Medicaid	Health insurance coverage varies
What type of care is provided?	Comfort care	Comfort (versus disease therapy)
Can patients still receive standard cancer care at the same time?	Yes; Palliative care does not require stopping other care	Generally, once hospice care starts, only comfort care is provided

How Effective is Palliative Care?

- **Research about palliative care shows:**
 - **Symptoms of cancer and long-term and severe illness are better controlled**
 - **Care permits the patient to better talk about their physical symptoms and convey their emotional state**
 - **Patients report a more positive experience with their medical care**
 - **Improvement in quality of life**
 - **Improved experience and lower stress for family members and caregivers**
 - **Institute of Medicine (2007) report: Patients have greater difficulty in adhering to the medical treatment plan when they are experiencing greater physical and emotional problems**
 - **Lower hospital costs due to reduced admissions and increased avoidance of certain tests and procedures**
 - **BETTER** results if started early in the disease
 - **DOES NOT** interfere with standard (for example, chemotherapy) care
 - **DOES NOT** reduce survival and **MAY INCREASE** survival

Is Palliative Care Commonly Used?

- **Since the National Consensus Project for Quality Palliative Care was established in the early 2000s, there has been a 164% increase in the number of palliative care programs**
- **Public awareness and intent to use palliative care is increasing-a recent survey showed that 92% of polled individuals state that they were highly likely to use palliative care for themselves or loved one**

Is Palliative Care Credentialed by Professional Organizations?

- **There are Clinical Practice Guidelines for Quality Palliative Care**
- **The Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education recognizes hospice and palliative medicine as a specific medical specialty**
- **There are hospice and palliative medicine graduate medical education fellowships for physicians**
- **Physicians who practice hospice and palliative care medicine take board exams for certification**
- **Masters programs are available for social workers who participate in hospice and palliative care**
- **The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (“Obamacare”) includes coverage for hospice and palliative care for children while Medicare coverage (Part A) is also available**
- **Quality of care is measured by various parameters**

References and Resources

National Consensus Project for Quality Palliative Care (2013):

<https://www.hpna.org/multimedia/>

[NCP_Clinical_Practice_Guidelines_3rd_Edition.pdf](#)

www.nationalconsensusproject.org

Center to Advance Palliative Care (List of Palliative Care Providers):

<http://www.getpalliativecare.org/providers>

Cancer.net:

<http://www.cancer.net/navigating-cancer-care/how-cancer-treated/palliative-care/caring-symptoms-cancer-and-its-treatment>

American Cancer Society:

<http://www.cancer.org/treatment/treatmentsandsideeffects/palliativecare/index>

National Cancer Institute:

<http://www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/factsheet/Support/palliative-care>