

Health Bulletin



Guidelines Help Demystify Cancer Care Decisions

(NAPSA)—To ease the burdens of cancer patients and their families, the National Comprehensive Cancer Network (NCCN) in collaboration with the American Cancer Society has released the *NCCN/ACS Advanced Cancer and Palliative Care Treatment Guidelines for Patients*.

It's the latest in a groundbreaking series aimed at encouraging better communication among patients, families and health care professionals.

Palliative or supportive care is defined in the guidelines as treatment that relieves symptoms, such as pain, difficulty breathing, loss of appetite, weight loss, fatigue, weakness, sleep problems, depression, anxiety and confusion, but is not expected to cure the disease. The main purpose is to improve the patient's quality of life.

Since its founding in 1995, physicians have looked to the collective expertise of the NCCN, an alliance of 19 of the world's leading cancer centers, as the standard for clinical treatment in oncology.

"By developing treatment guidelines for patients from the NCCN clinical practice guidelines," said William T. McGivney, Ph.D., chief executive officer of NCCN, "we're empowering the patient and caregiver, while providing medical professionals with a more open and informed channel of communication through which to work."

"Although decades of advances in early detection, diagnosis and

Satisfactory palliative care promotes a sense of control for the patient, relieves burdens and strengthens patient and family relationships. (T)

treatment have significantly improved the chances of a patient surviving cancer, still over half a million Americans will die from the disease each year," said Ralph B. Vance, MD, FACP and national volunteer president of the American Cancer Society. "The impact of these guidelines is significant."

The NCCN/ACS Advanced Cancer and Palliative Care Guidelines help patients and physicians understand and respond to the range of medical, psychological, and social issues they may be facing.

"In advanced cancer, aggressive anticancer therapy must be coupled with aggressive palliative care to optimize both quantity and quality of life. When further anticancer therapy becomes no longer effective, appropriate or desired, comprehensive palliative care must be intensified," said Michael Levy, MD, Ph.D., chair NCCN Palliative Care Clinical Practice Guidelines panel. "Satisfactory palliative care promotes a sense of control for the patient, relieves burdens and strengthens patient and family relationships."

Copies of *Advanced Cancer and Palliative Care Treatment Guidelines for Patients* are free on the Web at www.nccn.org and www.cancer.org or to those who call 1-888-909-NCCN or 1-800-ACS-2345.