

Spotlight on Health Care



How Palliative Care Helps Patients

(NAPSA)—Many Americans with serious and chronic illnesses are feeling better thanks to a growing trend in health care.

What It Is

The idea of palliative care—specialized medical care focused on relief from the symptoms, pain and stress of serious illness, whatever the diagnosis—is increasingly popular in hospitals and among patients and their families.

Who It Helps

Approximately 90 million Americans are living with serious illnesses such as cancer, heart disease, diabetes, Parkinson's, stroke and Alzheimer's, and this number is expected to more than double over the next 25 years. To meet their needs, there are now more than 1,500 hospitals nationwide with palliative care teams—a huge increase over the 600+ in 2000. Each team generally includes physicians, nurses and other specialists who work together with a patient's own doctor to provide an extra layer of support. Palliative care can be provided alongside curative treatment and is appropriate at any age and any stage of a serious illness. Unfortunately, more than 70 percent of Americans are unfamiliar with the term and its benefits. It's something you should ask the doctor about if you or someone you care for becomes seriously ill.

"Palliative care teams are transforming the care of serious illness in this country because they put control and choice back in the hands of the patient and family," explained Diane E. Meier, M.D., director of the nonprofit Center to Advance Palliative Care. "Hospitals today recognize that palliative care is the key to



The goal of palliative care is to improve quality of life for both patient and family.

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delivering better-quality, coordinated care to our sickest and most vulnerable patients."

How It Works

A strong partnership among patient, family and the palliative care team sees that treatment goals are established and coordinated and open and full communication is maintained throughout the course of a serious or chronic illness.

What People Say

According to recent research by Public Opinion Strategies, once they know about palliative care, 92 percent of people are highly likely to consider it for themselves or their families if they have a serious illness. In addition, 92 percent believe patients should have access to this type of care at all hospitals.

Recent studies also indicate that by closely matching treatments with a patient's goals and improving their quality of life, palliative care can also provide substantial cost savings.

Where To Learn More

For further information about palliative care and the nearest hospital with a palliative care team, visit www.getpalliativecare.org.