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# **Palliative Care and Hospice**

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## **What is palliative care?**

- The goal of palliative care is to prevent and relieve suffering and to support the best possible quality of life for the person and their family regardless of the stage of the disease or the need for other therapies.
- Palliative care is symptom management for persons who have a very serious or terminal illness. A specialized team cares for the person and their family.
- The palliative care teams are specialists who know how to manage symptoms and improve quality of life for the person who is sick. Common symptoms may be: pain, nausea (feeling sick in the stomach), shortness of breath, constipation, itching, depression, spiritual worry.
- The palliative care team spends time with the person and family to understand how they want to be treated. The person and family explain their goals for treatment.
- The whole person is cared for including his/her physical, emotional, social and spiritual needs.
- Family is considered to be who the person says they are. The family may be very close friends.
- Palliative care does not hurry death. It helps relieve symptoms so the person and family can control their care.
- Palliative care is usually paid for by insurance, Medicare, Medicaid.

## **What is hospice?**

- The goal of hospice care is to manage the needs of person at the end of life and support families through the final months and weeks of life.
- Hospice care addresses the needs of the family and friends following the person's death (bereavement care).
- Hospice care is provided wherever the person is. This may be in the person's private home or in nursing home.
- Hospice care is provided by a team of professionals (interdisciplinary team) who have specialized knowledge about end of life care.
- The interdisciplinary team may include: doctors, nurse practitioners, nurses, pharmacists, social workers, clergy, nursing assistants and other experts such as therapists or nutritionists.

- The hospice team spends time with the person and family to understand how they want to be treated. The person and family explain their goals for treatment.
- The whole person is cared for including his/her physical, emotional, social and spiritual needs.
- Hospice is usually paid for by insurance, Medicare, Medicaid.

## What will the palliative care and hospice teams do?

- Work to achieve the best quality of life for the person and his/her family when cure is not possible.
- Work with you and your family to identify any problems you are facing and address any concerns you may have.
- Manage distressing symptoms for the person experiencing them. Common symptoms may be: pain, nausea, shortness of breath, constipation, anxiety, depression, spiritual worry.
- Support the family.
- Respect the patient's goals, preferences and choices.

Other HPNA Teaching Sheets on are available at [www.HPNA.org](http://www.HPNA.org).

### Reference:

Ersek M. *Hospice and Palliative Nursing Assistant Core Curriculum*. Pittsburgh, PA. Hospice and Palliative Nurses Association: 2009.

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