



WHY HOSPICE CARE COULD BENEFIT YOUR LOVED ONE SOONER THAN YOU THINK

HOSPICE IS UNDERUTILIZED

People often wait too long before seeking hospice care. In the United States, the average length of hospice care is less than 60 days with 30 percent of those who elect hospice care dying in seven days or fewer. *It seems that misinformation about the benefit coupled with our general discomfort talking about end of life prevents Medicare beneficiaries and their family from taking advantage of the valuable benefit.*

WHAT SERVICES ARE OFFERED?

An interdisciplinary team of health and social service professionals joined by volunteers work together to provide the following:

- Comfort care for pain and symptom management
- Maintenance care for existing chronic conditions such as diabetes or emphysema
- Support for emotional, social, psychological and spiritual needs and issues related to dying
- Needed drugs, medical supplies and equipment
- Mentoring for the individual, his or her family, and friends on best practices in patient care
- Services like speech and physical therapy, which can be accessed when needed
- If receiving hospice at home, payment for short-term inpatient care is available when symptoms become too much to manage or when caregivers need a respite break to take care of themselves
- Grief counseling is available and can take the form of a support group, one-to-one therapeutic counseling, spiritual counseling, phone check-in calls and educational materials to surviving family and friends.

Those receiving care are allowed to keep their regular physician or nurse practitioner to oversee their care or to receive care from the doctor associated with the hospice organization.

Hospice is offered by both for-profit and not-for-profit organizations and can take place:

- At the home of the patient, a family member, or friend
- At a stand-alone hospice center
- In a hospital
- In a skilled nursing facility or other assisted care residence

BENEFITS FOR CAREGIVERS

An important part of taking care of yourself is taking breaks. *Your hospice team will offer to have volunteers come and sit with the patient or help with chores to make things easier for you.* They are there to assist your family member or friend - and you - so be sure to tell them how they can help.

Hospice will be there to provide comfort and support following your loved one's death. Bereavement services are offered to caregivers and families for at least one year. These services can take a variety of forms, including telephone calls, visits, support groups and written materials about grief.

For residential hospice, take note that the Medicare hospice benefit does not cover room and board in an assisted care facility (nursing home, hospice center), but will pay for care related to the terminal illness. However, there must be a contract between Medicare and the hospice providing the care.

Read the full story in our website - RESOURCES under HOSPICE ARTICLES.

Source: PBS News Hour by Leah Eskenazi, Family Caregiver Alliance, Jan. 29, 2015

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT HOSPICE CARE, PLEASE CALL US.

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