



PALLIATIVE CARE LEXICON

Created November 2016
Updated March 2017

Palliative Care

The health discipline focused on improving the quality of life of people living with serious life-threatening illness.

The WHO defines palliative care as:

“An approach that improves the quality of life of patients and their families facing the problem associated with life-threatening illness, through the prevention and relief of suffering by means of early identification and impeccable assessment and treatment of pain and other problems, physical, psychosocial and spiritual.

Palliative Care:

- provides relief from pain and other distressing symptoms;
- affirms life and regards dying as a normal process;
- intends neither to hasten or postpone death;
- integrates the psychological and spiritual aspects of patient care;
- offers a support system to help patients live as actively as possible until death;
- offers a support system to help the family cope during the patient’s illness and in their own bereavement;
- uses a team approach to address the needs of patients and their families, including bereavement counselling, if indicated;
- will enhance quality of life, and may also positively influence the course of illness;
- is applicable early in the course of illness, in conjunction with other therapies that are intended to prolong life, such as chemotherapy or radiation therapy, and includes those investigations needed to better understand and manage distressing clinical complications.”

Integrated Palliative Care

Integrated palliative care is more than a bio-medical model of care. It is a collaborative model that takes into account the continuum of care and range of people who need to provide it: friends, families, healthcare professionals including specialists, home care providers, primary care, social workers and spiritual care. Social inclusion is an important component.

Communication between the range of people engaged in care is open, transparent and accessible to allow timely, knowledgeable and coordinated care. Palliative care is delivered in the

Approved by CSPCP Board October 31, 2016

Updated March 13, 2017 - added Integrated Palliative Care; minor change to A Palliative Approach to Care

location determined by the patient, including but not limited to hospitals, home, institutions and shelters.

A Palliative Approach to Care

The application of palliative care knowledge and expertise into the delivery of care across different health care sectors and professions by healthcare professionals who do not specialize in palliative care. A palliative approach to care is particularly important to embed early in patient care when the prognosis of the patient is uncertain, and survivorship is a possibility.

Specialist Palliative Care (see Palliative Care Consultation below)

Specialist Palliative Care is provided by a specially-trained team of doctors, nurse practitioners, nurses, social workers and other health care professionals who work together with a patient's primary care team to provide an extra layer of support for people with serious illness. It focuses on providing relief from the symptoms and improving quality of life for both the patient and the family. It is appropriate at any age and at any stage of a life-threatening illness and can be provided along with curative-intent treatment.

Palliative Care Consultation

A palliative care physician consultation is an assessment rendered following a request from a referring physician or nurse practitioner who, in light of his/ her professional knowledge of the patient, requests the opinion of another physician (the "palliative care specialist physician") competent to give advice in this field because of the complexity, seriousness, or obscurity of the case, or because another opinion is requested by the patient or patient's representative. The palliative care specialist physician has enhanced skills or specialty status in palliative medicine gained through experience or formal training, or a combination of both. The palliative care consultant will usually assess physical, social, psychological and spiritual concerns, and recommend strategies for their management. It includes a comprehensive review of pharmacotherapy, appropriate counselling and consideration of appropriate community services, where indicated the palliative care specialist physician will usually be part of a multidisciplinary team, which will also be involved in the consultation and subsequently recommended plan. A palliative care consultation does not include assessment of eligibility for medical assistance in dying.

Supportive Care

Care that aims to relieve a person's symptoms or suffering during illness with a life-threatening condition where the goal of care is cure. In situations where the prognosis is unclear, especially early in the course of illness, there is overlap between supportive care and a palliative approach to care.

Palliative Care Unit

A palliative care unit is an acute care hospital unit staffed by an interdisciplinary team of health care professionals with enhanced skills or specialist accreditation in palliative care, where the care

primarily focuses on relief of suffering and improvement in quality of life, and the patients' underlying conditions are usually not expected to be able to be cured.

Hospice Care

Care that focuses on relieving symptoms and supporting patients with incurable illness that have a life expectancy of weeks to months. In most cases hospice care is provided to a patient in his or her own home. It also can be provided in freestanding hospices, hospitals, nursing homes and other long-term care facilities.

Hospice Facility

A hospice facility or residential hospice is a physical structure where patients live when they have a limited life expectancy, usually of three months or less, and are unable to live in their own homes. Hospice facilities may be free-standing structures, or may be located within other structures such as long term care homes or hospitals.

Long-Term Care

Care that supports patients with chronic impairment for an indefinite period of time, provided in nursing facilities or at home.

Palliative Medicine

The medical specialty focusing on the knowledge and skills which make up the physician's role in providing specialist palliative care, including teaching and research.

Survivorship

Survivorship refers to a distinct phase in the illness trajectory between cessation of attempts to cure the disease and transition back to normal life, or as near to the person's normal as possible. Learning to live with stable illness may be one state of survivorship, and cure is not necessarily required. People who have been cured of a serious illness may be irreversibly damaged by the disease or its treatment, and may require significant multidisciplinary care to achieve their full subsequent potential.

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