Hospice Care For Cancer Patients

Sometimes the fight against cancer lasts a long time and takes a tremendous physical and emotional toll. Unfortunately, even with the best care and a great fight, cancer wins. At this point, the loving focus moves from ways to win the battle to ways to walk the next path in peace and in comfort. Hospice care can address these needs through a holistic and loving approach. Our mission as a hospice is to provide a high quality of life, care and comfort to patients and families during their last days. We are proud to do it as a partner to the patient and their family.

Information for Cancer Patients and Their Families

Cancer patients and their families often may have tremendous emotional, spiritual and psychological issues to deal with, even after treatment has ended. Our organization was designed to be of service to these patients and families. Below are some of the ways we can serve the patient and their family:

Time for Hospice

When cancer treatments no longer heal, and a cure or remission no longer seems possible, hospice may be the best option. Some patients may have complex medical needs and families may have
strong ideas about care going forward. The key is a good assessment and a multidisciplinary team to care for the patient’s needs and wishes as well as those of the family. Hospice care provides for the mental, physical and spiritual needs of the cancer patient and their family, when treatment is no longer an option.

Physicians define the end stage of cancer as a life expectancy of six months or less. Physicians look at certain indices that show that the disease has progressed to this point. They are:

- Treatment is less effective or not effective at all and no change is expected
- The malignancy or cancer is worsening
- The emotional, physical and spiritual costs of treatment on the patient and the family are greater than the expected benefits

Typically, the physician recommends and refers a patient to a hospice hospice provider when they feel that a patient has six months or less left to live. Patients and families may know better and can request an evaluation for hospice as an option for their care at any time. This is an important quality of life issue that is better made sooner, than later. Hospice may be available for weeks or months. Call our organization to see how we can help you to make this very important decision.

Hospice Services for the Patient

Sometimes people think of hospice only as an ending. Hospice is really about a change from treatment mode to a quality of life focus. Hospice is designed to bring acceptance, peace, comfort and moments of joy to the patient and family, even when the circumstances are dire.
Our hospice team has significant experience walking with patients who have cancer. We understand the challenges and the issues our patients and families face. Our journey is to support you and your family through a very difficult stage of life with grace and dignity.

Our team in conjunction with the patient and family will create a plan of care that will be regularly updated to reflect the patient’s current status. As symptoms and conditions change, so will the plan. In the plan, we will outline comprehensive services for patients with cancer:

**Pain Management**

Our Team includes medical specialists in pain management and we ensure patients are comfortable, free of pain and able to enjoy life and remain in control of day-to-day decisions for as long as possible. Patient wishes are an important component of this process.

**Place Of Service**

Our organization offers care for the patients in their own homes, assisted living, or long term care facilities. Many patients choose to stay home because they feel most secure and at peace there. Some patients prefer our facilities because of the health care staffing accessibility. If there are complications, or when medical issues or symptoms become too much for care at home, we can provide 24 hour care until the patient is ready to return home or until the end.

**Multidisciplinary Team**

The plan of care is created with the physician, patient and
family. It may include therapists, counselors, nurses, clergy, social workers, etc. Regardless of the team, the plan goals remain the same; to comfort, support and care for the patients, their friends and family. As a part of the plan all medications, medical supplies and medical equipment are included and outlined.

**Hospice Services for the Family**

Family members be emotionally overwhelmed, exhausted and worn out. Sometimes the family has to make health care, guardianship and financial decisions. This is in addition to being caregivers and supporting the patient and other family members. When a physician recommends hospice, it can be very difficult for the family to hear. It may mean the fight is over and the end is drawing near. At this time, our organization provides support and comprehensive service for families including:

**Educating Caregivers**

The caregivers are so important to the patient and to the hospice professional staff. As the patient grows weaker and has more complicated needs, they rely more on the caregiver to provide support and sometimes services. We can teach caregivers to provide health care, support and home services. This education is vital so the caregiver knows how best to help.

**Support During Tough Decisions**

Hospice staff work with families to explain legal issues and to get through the emotional issues when they have to make tough decisions for the patient. Social workers who have significant experience with hospice are available to meet with the patients and families to discuss these choices and provide support.
Nurse Assistance By Home

When caregivers will have questions and concerns we facilitate communication at any time. A nurse or healthcare professional is available by phone to answer questions. Families won’t have to worry when care issues come up and they aren’t sure how to handle it. The core of our organization after hour program is Telecare provides which provides trained hospice medical professionals. 24/7. They can dispatch a medical professional to attend to the patient in their home if needed. Many caregivers are comforted to know they have back-up any time night or day.

Emotional And Spiritual Assistance

Hospice meets the needs of loved ones along with those of the patient. We can help to connect with clergy or counseling and provide emotional and spiritual support.

Financial Planning

Hospice services are covered by Medicare, Medicaid/Medi-Cal and private insurers, but families may have financial questions as a result of the long term illness. As a part of the care plan, Social workers help families with financial issues and financial assistance during hospice care. After death, they can refer grieving families for financial assistance through human services, if needed.

Caregiver Respite

Caregivers can get stressed from trying to care for a seriously ill loved one. They may become exhausted and ill themselves. Our organization offers the patient up to five days of care as in inpatient so that the caregiver can rest.
Grief Services

The hospice team provides a variety of services for the surviving loved ones for a year after a death in order assist with issues of grief and bereavement and offer coping skills.

Hospice Care and Support

Families and friends may be aware of the medical and pain management aspects that are offered to patients who are terminal by hospice. Hospice offers much more, including support, resources, and care. Hospice walks with the family and patient through very difficult times and brings quality of life and comfort to the most difficult time of life. This support may come to the home or in our facilities, offering patients and their family’s choices.

Our organization uses an individualized approach to hospice. The patient and family participate in the care plan and decisions are made based on the patient’s medical, emotional and spiritual needs as well as their wishes. Our mission is to serve each patient and their family individually with their comfort and care in mind. We advocate for quality of life and care.

Reducing Hospitalizations

Hospice care often reduces the need for frequent stressful re-hospitalizations. Because we provide care for medical problems and training for caregivers, hospice patients experience lower hospitalization rate.

Hospice provides safety and security. One of the benefits of our organization is the Telecare program. This program offers
24/7 telephonic response for patients, caregivers and family members. If needed, a medical professional can be dispatched to the home. We also provide caregiver education and support services.

**Talking About Hospice With A Loved One**

The final months and days of life are frequently marked by strong emotions and hard decisions. Talking about hospice, even with those closest to you, can be difficult. Here are some tips to get the discussion going.

**For Patients Speaking To Families**

Education is key. Educate yourself first. By now, you’ve probably done some research on this website. It might also be helpful for you to learn some common misconceptions about end-of-life care, as your family may be misinformed about the realities of hospice. View our video on dispelling hospice myths. Read and share “Considering

**A Discussion Guide for Families**

Determine what your loved ones know. Before bringing up hospice, make sure your loved ones have a clear understanding of your health status. People handle difficult information in different ways. If family members are not accepting or understanding of your prognosis, you might want to have your physician, clergy or a trusted friend speak with them on your behalf.

Discuss your goals for the future, as well as theirs. As a patient, your greatest concern might be to live without pain, or to stay at home or not to be a burden. Ask your loved ones what their concerns are when they consider the coming months, weeks and days. Explain that hospice is not giving up. It is an active choice to ensure that everyone’s needs are met.
Take initiative. Remember, it’s up to you to express your wishes. Sometimes, out of concern for your feelings, your family or loved ones might be reluctant to raise the issue of hospice care for you.

Ask permission

Asking permission to discuss a difficult topic assures your loved one that you will respect his or her wishes and honor them. Say something like, “I would like to talk about how we can continue to ensure you get the very best care and attention as your condition progresses. Is that okay?”

Determine what is important to your loved one

Ask him or her to consider the future: “What are you hoping for in the coming days, weeks or months? What are you most concerned about?” The patient might express a desire to be comfortable, to stay at home or to not become a burden.

Discuss hospice care as a means of fulfilling the patient’s wishes.

Now that your loved one has told you what is important to him or her, explain that hospice is a way of making sure wishes and desires are met. For some, the word hospice evokes a false notion of giving up. Explain that hospice is not about surrendering to disease or death. It is about bringing quality of life to the patient’s remaining months, weeks or days.

Assure the patient that he/she is in control

Hospice gives patients options: the option to remain in the comfort of their own home, the option to take advantage of as much emotional and spiritual support as they desire, the
option to have their own doctor actively involved in their care. Reassure your loved one that you will honor his or her right to make choices about what is most important in life.

**Be a good listener.**

Keep in mind that this is a conversation, not a debate. Hear what the other person is saying. Know that it is normal to encounter resistance the first time you talk about hospice care. But if you listen and understand your loved one’s barriers and reasons for resisting, you will be prepared to address and ease his/her concerns in your next hospice discussion.

**Contact Harbor Light Hospice for Support**

Harbor Light Hospice can significantly improve the overall quality of life for cancer patients and their families. To learn more about our supportive services, call one of our locations or send us a message online.