An Introduction to Palliative Care: How palliative care teams support mental and emotional health of people living with serious illness and their caregivers

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Using Zoom Interpretation

- On the bottom right of your screen, you’ll see an “interpretation” button.

- Click on it, then click on the language you’d like.
Introduction to Palliative Medicine

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Objectives

- Define palliative medicine
- Discuss the benefits of early palliative care interventions
- Compare differences and similarities between palliative medicine and hospice
Overview

- What comes to mind when you hear the term palliative care?
Defining Palliative Care

- Palliative care sees **the person** beyond the disease.
  - “A person living with cancer” vs. “cancer patient”
Defining Palliative Care

- **Definition:**
  - Palliative care is a **philosophy of care** and type of **specialized health care** for people living with a serious illness.
  
  - This type of care is focused on **providing relief from the symptoms and stress of the illness.**
  
  - The goal is to **improve quality of life** for both the **patient and the family.**

*Adapted from Center to Advance Palliative Care (CAPC), 2019*
Defining Palliative Care

- Provided by a specially-trained team, palliative care specialists work together with a patient’s other doctors to provide an essential layer of support.

- Palliative care is based on the needs of the patient, not on the prognosis. It is appropriate at any age and at any point in a serious illness and can be delivered with curative treatment.
Serious Illness

Living with a Serious Illness

**Common Diagnoses**
- Any life-limiting illness
- Cancer
- Heart failure
- Liver, Kidney, or Lung Disease
- Dementia
- ALS, Parkinson’s Disease
- Multiple hospitalizations
- Functional Decline

**Diagnoses Less Well Served by PC**
- Hypertension
- Diabetes
- High cholesterol
- Infections that are expected to improve or get better (influenza, common cold)
- Chronic pain that is not from a serious illness
Symptom and Stress Relief

Relief From Symptoms and Stress

- Pain
- Shortness of breath
- Nausea
- Constipation
- Anxiety
- Depression

- Coping/Stress
- Fatigue
- Poor appetite/Weight Loss
- Neuropathy
- Caregiving
Quality of Life

Improve Quality of Life for Patient and Family

- Ensure that your *overall care plan* *matches* with what matters most to you

- Recognize that *patient and families are a unit*
Domains

Palliative Care Domains

- Symptom Management
- Psychosocial Support
- Patient and Family
- Info About Prognosis, Options
- Spiritual Support
- Assess Values and Translate into Medical Choices
Team-Based Approach

Doctor & Nurse
- Prescribes medication
- Helps with medical decisions
- Coordinates with other doctors

Social Worker
- Emotional Support
- Caregiver support
- Medical equipment
- Financial concerns

Chaplain
- Spiritual support
- Existential distress
- Prayers and blessings
Compare Palliative Care and Hospice
Comparison

- **Palliative Care**
  - Any patient with a life-limiting illness (at any stage) with imbalance in their wellness
  - Concurrent with ongoing “curative” management
  - Goal: Improved quality and prolongation of life

- **Hospice**
  - Insurance Benefit**
  - Prognosis less than 6 months
  - “Curative” management no longer beneficial
  - Goal: Improved quality of life
Significant Research

- Median Estimates of Survival:
  - 11.6 months in early PC group
  - 8.9 months in standard group

Source: Temel, New England J Medicine 2010; 263: 733-742
Barriers to Palliative Care

“Well...my patient isn’t dying yet.”
- Lack of knowledge about the subspecialty Palliative Medicine
- Prognostication is difficult

“I am already taking care of the patient.”
- Competence-Confidence paradox

“You send patients to palliative care and they will die sooner.”
- Self-fulfilling prophecy

“It will take their hope away.”
Conclusion

- What comes to mind when you hear the term palliative care?
How palliative care teams support mental and emotional health of people living with serious illness and their caregivers

Keri O. Brenner, MD MPA
The Landscape is Changing at the End of Life
Biomedical breakthroughs have prolonged the “living-dying” interval

- Gawande, A. Being Mortal. 2014
- Lynn, Adamson, 2003
We are spending more time facing our mortality
The territory at the end of life is filled with challenges & unknowns
Greatest Concerns for Patients with Life-Limiting Illness

- Being a burden on others (40-60%)
  - Primary reason patients say they want to hasten their death is because they feel like they are a burden

- Loss of dignity and personal worth (80%)

Palliative care supports patients’ mental & emotional health

- Goals of care
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Demoralization
  - Hopelessness
  - Helplessness
- Existential Distress
  - Loneliness & isolation
  - Fears of debility & dependence
  - Loss of meaning & identity
  - Death anxiety
Palliative care supports caregivers’ mental & emotional health

- Provide an *essential* layer of support
- Visits include family & caregivers
- Validation & recognition of challenges
- Recognize how intense emotions are contagious
- Network caregivers with resources
Practical ways to maintain emotional balance & wellbeing as a caregiver

1. Caring is both giving & RECEIVING
Practical ways to maintain emotional balance & wellbeing as a caregiver

1. Caring is both giving & RECEIVING
2. Stay connected to lifelines & an “inner circle” of support
Practical ways to maintain emotional balance & wellbeing as a caregiver

1. Caring is both giving & RECEIVING
2. Stay connected to lifelines & an “inner circle” of support
3. Be aware of triggers

![Emotions with a person under stress]
Practical ways to maintain emotional balance & wellbeing as a caregiver

1. Caring is both giving & RECEIVING
2. Stay connected to lifelines & an “inner circle” of support
3. Be aware of triggers
4. Maintain an emotionally balanced diet
Practical ways to maintain emotional balance & wellbeing as a caregiver

1. Caring is both giving & RECEIVING
2. Stay connected to lifelines & an “inner circle” of support
3. Be aware of triggers
4. Maintain an emotionally balanced diet
5. Small moments make a big difference
1 Minute Meditation
Caregiver Center
AT STANFORD HEALTH CARE

Contact us at:

Tel: (650) 497-7100
Email: caregiver@stanfordhealthcare.org

We support YOU while you care for your loved one
What is Self Care? Taking Care of YOU!

• Taking care of yourself as well as you take care of others:
  • Are you eating healthfully?
  • Do you get enough rest? Exercise?
  • Do you get to your own medical appointments?
  • Do you see friends/have fun?

“If you don’t focus on your wellness now, you will be forced to focus on your illness later.”
Connection:
You are not alone
Connection Resources

Connect with other Caregivers:
Smart Patients
https://www.smartpatients.com/partners/stanford-caregivers

Connect with professionals:
Family Caregiver Alliance
San Mateo County Network of Care: https://sanmateo.networkofcare.org/aging/

Avenidas (Palo Alto-based senior services agency)
https://www.avenidas.org/programs/avenidas-without-walls

Area Agencies on Aging:
https://eldercare.acl.gov/

Connect with Friends, Neighbors, even Acquaintances:
https://www.caringbridge.org/, https://www.ianacare.com/
Control: Only what you can!
Control Resources

Stanford Health Resource Hub:  
https://stanford.auntbertha.com/

Stanford Health Library website:  
https://healthlibrary.stanford.edu/about.html

Dr. Grant Smith’s webinar:  
“What if I Get Seriously Ill?  Guidance on Making Your Health Care Decisions During COVID-19:  
http://med.stanford.edu/palliative-care/news.html
Cope: Choosing optimism
Coping Resources

For more information on:

• Coping
• Mindfulness
• Self Care
• Exercise/Movement
• Nature
• Nutrition

Health Library webpage:
http://healthlibrary.stanford.edu/selfcare.html

Dr. Keri Brenner’s webinar:
“Flattening the Curve of Distress: How to be a Catalyst of Calm in COVID-19
http://med.stanford.edu/palliative-care/news.html

Stanford Supportive Care:
Virtual offerings for caregivers
Cancer: https://stanfordhealthcare.org/for-patients-visitors/cancer-supportive-care-program.html

Neuroscience: https://stanfordhealthcare.org/for-patients-visitors/neuroscience-supportive-care-program.html
Contact Us:

Caregiver@stanfordhealthcare.org

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http://healthlibrary.stanford.edu/caregiver-center.html