

Hospice and Palliative Approaches to Care

While the goal for both Hospice and Palliative care is to provide comfort and support to individuals with serious illnesses, there are some key differences. The terms Hospice Palliative care, Palliative, and Hospice can be outlined as follows:

Hospice Palliative Care

Refers to an approach to care, as well as a philosophy of care. It is appropriate for any individual and/or family living with, or at risk of developing, a life-threatening illness. It includes end-of-life care, but is not limited to the time immediately before death.

Palliative Care

The term “palliative care” can be used in different ways. A person may have palliative care needs, or they may receive a palliative approach to care. It is important to maintain a person-centered approach by not using ‘palliative’ as a label for patients or as a category of patients.

Palliative care is not a phase or stage of a person’s illness. Palliative care is appropriate at any time a person with a life-limiting illness has unmet needs, and a palliative approach to care can be introduced as early as the time of diagnosis.

Hospice

The term “hospice” can refer to a variety of specific services, supports and care settings:

Hospice residences create a home-like environment for patients who are at the end of their lives and need around-the-clock care, best provided in a specially focused care setting.

Visiting hospices offer care through out-patient facilities or by travelling to a patient’s home.

Virtual hospices offer online resources to members of the public on palliative care, advance care planning and other topics relevant to the last stages of life.

There are several distinguishing features between Palliative Care and Hospice Care.

1. Focus and Timing:

- Palliative Care: Palliative care can be provided at any stage of a serious illness, regardless of whether a person is receiving curative treatment or not. It is an approach that aims to improve the quality of life for patients and their families by addressing physical, emotional, social, and spiritual needs.
- Hospice Care: Hospice care is a specific type of palliative care that is provided when a patient's condition is considered terminal, and curative treatment is no longer effective or desired. It is primarily for those with a life expectancy of six months or less.

2. Location of Care:

- Palliative Care: Palliative care can be provided in various settings, including hospitals, clinics, outpatient facilities, and even at home.
- Hospice Care: Hospice care is typically provided in the patient's home or in a hospice facility. It focuses on providing comfort and support during the final stages of life.

3. *Treatment Goals:*

- Palliative Care: The main goal of palliative care is to alleviate symptoms, manage pain, and improve the patient's overall quality of life. It can be provided alongside curative treatments.
- Hospice Care: Hospice care shifts the focus from curative treatments to managing symptoms and providing emotional support to enhance the patient's comfort and dignity during their final days.

4. *Eligibility and Length of Care:*

- Palliative Care: Palliative care is available to anyone with a serious illness, regardless of their life expectancy. Patients can receive palliative care for an extended period, and it can be integrated into their ongoing treatment plan.
- Hospice Care: Hospice care is available to individuals who meet specific criteria, usually a prognosis of six months or less to live if the illness runs its natural course. However, if a patient's condition improves or stabilizes, they can be discharged from hospice and return to palliative care or curative treatments.

5. *Care Team:*

- Palliative Care: The palliative care team typically includes physicians, nurses, social workers, and other healthcare professionals who work together to provide holistic care to the patient.
- Hospice Care: The hospice care team includes professionals such as physicians, nurses, hospice aides, counselors, and volunteers, who provide specialized end-of-life care and emotional support to the patient and their family.