

Hospice Care is a Specialized Care

FOR MANY YEARS, DEATH HAS BEEN A DISTANT, FRIGHTENING AND SOMETIMES mystical event. The notion of dying at home was foreign as hospice care was first introduced as late as the 1970s. Ill patients have often felt that staying at the hospital or at an inpatient facility is the only way to treat the disease. However, this pattern is changing. Ann Neuman of The New York Times wrote, "Hospice programs now care for 60 percent of all dying patients each year, at a total of 1.5 million."

Hospice care is a specialized care that provides support to the patient and their family during a serious illness. Hospice care focuses on quality of life rather than a cure to the illness.

Now, as Hospice programs are more prevalent, patients and their families are sharing the death experience in the comfort of the same home where they have shared their cherished living experiences. One of the main goals of hospice is to care for patients so that they live comfortably



and with dignity until they pass away. Another goal is to help the patient's family feel comfortable and be with them in their final moments.

There is still, however, a stigma against hospice care as there is misinformation and continued lack of trust toward hospice programs. Many do not know that hospice requires patients to have a prognosis of six months or less to live. Patients and their families often do not take advantage of the full six months because they are fearful; most patients enter hospice in the last four weeks of life. Hospice programs, like Hospice Care of South Florida, are available to support the patient and their loved ones with the care they need.

Just as each person's life is unique, so is his or her passing. It is important to acknowledge the patient's wishes and have him or her feel comfortable when they need it the most. Although it may be difficult for the patient and their family to discuss pre-death arrangements, it is another way of acknowledging the patient's approaching passing while also providing the family comfort that the decisions that will be made are the patient's wishes.

Hospice care programs often include platforms such as "Five Wishes," which gives the patient a chance to explain how they want to be treated if they become seriously ill. It is the first living will that specifies the patient's position about their personal, emotional, spiritual AND medical wishes. It allows the patient choose the person they wish to make healthcare decisions if they are unable to make it themselves. It also helps explain to the patient's family, friends and doctor exactly how they wish to be treated if they are very ill. Most importantly, it provides comfort for the patient and their family during a very difficult time. The family will not have to make hard choices if the patient is unable to communicate, providing ease during this time.

An advanced illness affects the entire family, not just the person who is ill. Those affected need and deserve ongoing support before and after a loved one's death.

Hospice programs, like Hospice Care of South Florida, have interdisciplinary teams of physicians, nurses, nursing assistants, social workers, and pastoral guides and volunteers that are available to take care of the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of the patient. Social Services personnel are available to assist, when requested, with the process of completing advanced directives. Making funeral plans before a patient's death can also be helpful to the family in carrying out the patient's wishes.

If you have any questions about hospice care, please call Hospice Care of South Florida at 305-591-1606 for more details. You can also visit Hospice Care of South Florida at hospicesouthflorida.org for more information.

For Life's Difficult Moments

Hospice Care of South Florida's dedicated Interdisciplinary Team provides a broad range of services aimed at keeping the patient living comfortably and with dignity.



Hospice provides medications, medical equipment and supplies necessary to promote comfort for the patient.

Call us today to learn more about how Hospice Care of South Florida can help your loved one and your family get through life's toughest moments.

24 HOUR PHONE LINE: (305) 591-1606

 **Hospice Care**
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