

# Exploring the Benefits of Palliative Care

**Palliative care is a specialized approach to medical care for patients with serious or life-threatening diseases<sup>1</sup>**

- Improves quality of life for both patients and their support systems
- Offers treatment and pain, stress, and symptom relief

Palliative care incorporates care provided by a multi-disciplinary health team in hospitals, outpatient clinics, long-term care facilities, or at home.



**Palliative care may be beneficial to patients at any stage of their cancer journey**

- An individual is considered a cancer survivor from the time of diagnosis through the balance of his or her life.
- The American Cancer Society estimates that there were nearly 17 million cancer survivors in the United States in 2019. By 2030, that number is expected to grow to more than 22 million.<sup>2</sup>

**~22.1 million cancer survivors by 2030**



- Coordinated care for patients with serious illnesses is critical to prevent symptoms from worsening.<sup>3</sup>
- In addition to active treatment, the American Society of Clinical Oncology recommends palliative care for all patients with an advanced cancer diagnosis.<sup>4</sup>
- Palliative care for oncology patients can improve quality of life, mood, satisfaction, and communication about delivery of end-of-life care.<sup>5,6</sup>

## Types of palliative care services include<sup>7</sup>:



**Team-based planning and communication among the patient, family, and provider team**



**Psychosocial support for patients and families**



**Pain and painless symptom management**



**Bereavement support for families and care-team members**



**Continuity of care across clinical settings and services**



**Hospice care**



**Attention to spiritual comfort**

## Patient-specific cancer care plan components<sup>8</sup>

- Interdisciplinary care team responsibilities
- Treatment goals
- Estimated total and out-of-pocket costs
- Quality-of-life information and the patient's likely experience with treatment
- Survivorship plan

## Advanced care planning<sup>8,9</sup>

- Discussing health care directives
  - Cardiopulmonary resuscitation, ventilator use, artificial nutrition, and comfort-care planning
- Selecting a health care proxy
- Abiding by state laws regarding documentation of advanced directives
- Identifying reassessment timeframes

## Considerations for palliative care

- Discussing disease progression and palliative care options with patients and their support systems can improve quality of life
- Early initiation of palliative care can help patients make informed decisions and set realistic expectations for treatment
- When started early, palliative care offers a different hope than that of a cure for the disease itself

## References

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