

PALLIATIVE CARE

creates
a place of
comfort and caring

Ellen's room is full of mementos: photos of children and grandchildren, of beloved pets she and her late husband raised over the years. Needlepoint pillows are piled on the bed and a cassette recorder plays tapes of her favourite music.

Although Ellen has a terminal illness and may not be able to return home from the hospital, she is treated by the health care team as someone who is living, not someone who is dying.

Family and friends can visit to provide companionship throughout the day.

provides moments
of joy and
peace

In the past, the family cared for the dying person. Surrounded by the love of friends and family, persons with terminal illnesses stayed at home rather than going to a hospital.

The goal of palliative care is to provide this same comfort and compassionate care when the hope of a cure is no longer possible. The professional health care team is there to support the family and patient. The family may also help care for their loved one.

Every person deserves to live fully and to die with dignity in an atmosphere of compassion and love. Those who are dying may need the time and opportunity to say goodbye to family members and to deal with issues in their lives which may be troubling them. Palliative care seeks to respond to all of these concerns.

In the period leading up to death, patient and family can discover meaning in pain and suffering, as well as spiritual growth through the experience of coming closer to God.

manages
pain

Ellen's comfort is the most important thing to all those who care for her. The palliative care team works together to help her have a comfortable death.

When she needs it most, Ellen may wear a small pump which delivers relief from extreme pain. The team can also treat other symptoms such as nausea, lack of appetite and fatigue.

Ellen could even be at home. A palliative care team would visit and make sure she has all she needs to be comfortable.

Ellen has the right to make major decisions about treatment, including asking for drugs that will ease her pain, even if the secondary effect of these drugs means her life might be shortened.

Why palliative care?

You seek palliative care if you know you are dying. You and your family have decided to seek relief from suffering by choosing treatment that focuses on controlling pain. You want to die when your body is ready. You do not want to be hooked up to machines when there is no hope you will get better. You are seeking compassion, love and spiritual comfort from your caregivers. Palliative care provides all of this.

Where can I get more information?

In Canada, palliative care is provided in palliative care units, through consultation services in hospitals or in the home setting. Talk to your health care professionals or contact a hospital near you to find out what services are available in your area. For more information, call the Canadian Palliative Care Association at (613) 230-3343, toll free 1-800-668-2785 (within Canada).

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What is palliative care?

Palliative care is a service for people who are dying. A team of health professionals, including doctors, social workers, nurses, pastoral workers, physiotherapists and volunteers, provide physical, emotional and spiritual care for patients and families. Everyone works together to make the patient and the family comfortable and to relieve their suffering. The goal of the palliative care team is not to cure illness but to provide quality of life.

Patient and family decide what kind of care they want.

Palliative care... involves the greatest respect and care for the dying person's human needs - emotional, physical, social and spiritual.

Archbishop Marcel Gervais
President of the Canadian Conference
of Catholic Bishops
January, 1993

Palliative care ... enables a person to live as fully as possible until they die.... it is the affirmation of life, not the choosing of death.... palliative care has demonstrated to the world that the pain and other symptoms of advanced disease can be relieved.

Dr. John F. Scott
Director - Regional Palliative Care Services
Ottawa