

Palliative Care

Many seriously ill individuals are not aware of the benefits of palliative care or have the mistaken belief that it is only for those with a terminal illness. In fact, palliative care, with its goal of preventing or easing suffering and improving the quality of life for both patient and family, is appropriate for anyone experiencing pain and discomfort associated with their illness or its treatment. Palliative care typically is provided by a team of professional –physicians, nurses, pharmacists, social workers, chaplains, and nutritionists – specially trained to treat distressing symptoms such as pain, fatigue, nausea, loss of appetite, sleep problems, and the emotional distress that can accompany a serious illness. Palliative care specialists are also experts in communication and skilled in helping patients and families navigate the uncertainties associated with serious illness. It is important for patients to understand that they do not have to give up their own health care provider and treatment plans or the goal of pursuing a cure for their illness in order to get palliative care. The palliative care team will work with, not replace, the patient’s primary treatment provider.