

Above & Beyond...

Your source for news and information to take our collective care to the next level

Myths vs. Facts About Hospice Care

Hospice care is often misunderstood. Many people associate hospice only with the final days of life, overlooking its broader potential to improve quality of life, ease symptoms and offer comfort at any stage of serious illness. As senior living staff, your role is vital in helping residents and their families understand the full scope of hospice care, ensuring they make informed choices. We want to dispel common myths and highlight key facts about hospice care—clarifying misconceptions and empowering you with knowledge to better support your residents and their loved ones.

MYTH: Hospice means giving up.

FACT: Hospice is medical care with the goal of comfort and dignity for someone whose life is drawing to a close. It is, in fact, the “something more” for someone who has been told nothing more can be done for them.

MYTH: Hospice is only for cancer patients.

FACT: Not anymore. When hospice began in the U.S. in the mid-1970s, most hospice patients had cancer. Today, while many hospice patients have cancer, the majority have other life-limiting illnesses such as end-stage heart, lung or kidney disease, or Alzheimer’s and other dementias.

MYTH: Hospice means I’m going to die soon.

FACT: Studies show exactly the opposite. Although hospice care neither hastens death nor prolongs life, patients with certain illnesses actually live somewhat longer with hospice care than those with the same illness who don’t choose hospice care. Regardless of the illness, patient/family satisfaction with services received is consistently higher when hospice is involved.

MYTH: Patients can’t keep their doctor if they enter a hospice program.

FACT: The patient’s family doctor or specialist is encouraged to remain engaged in their care. The hospice physician works closely with their doctor – who knows them better (medically) than anyone else – to determine the specific medical needs that will be addressed in their plan of care.

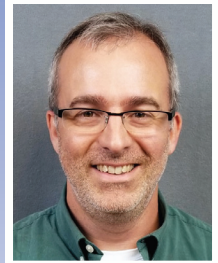
MYTH: It is the doctor’s responsibility to bring up hospice.

FACT: While it is the physician’s responsibility to determine whether a patient meets the medical eligibility criteria to receive hospice services, it is appropriate for the patient (or caregiver) or senior living staff to initiate the discussion if they choose. Hospice & Community Care consistently hears from our patients/families that they wish they had gotten hospice care sooner; it is a good idea for the patient and family to let the physician know AT THE TIME OF DIAGNOSIS that they are open to discussing hospice care at the appropriate time.

MYTH: Once you choose hospice care there is no turning back.

FACT: Patients are free to leave a hospice program at any time for any reason without penalty. They can re-enroll in a hospice program any time that they meet the medical eligibility criteria.

A Message from Our Associate Medical Director



As the new Associate Medical Director for Hospice & Community Care, I am eager to begin collaborating with you and your team. I have had the privilege of working as a physician for Hospice & Community Care for five years, and I am committed to our mission to provide personalized, compassionate care. I understand the unique needs and challenges involved in supporting our aging population because of my background in geriatric medicine and my extensive experience working with local senior living communities.

In my previous roles, I had the privilege of working closely with senior living teams to integrate hospice support into comprehensive daily care plans. This experience deepened my appreciation for the dedication and expertise that your staff brings to resident care. I saw firsthand how a strong partnership between hospice and senior living communities can ensure that residents’ physical, emotional and spiritual needs are fully met. I’m excited to bring this collaborative spirit to our work together.

At Hospice & Community Care, we recognize that hospice care in a senior living setting requires a thoughtful, coordinated approach, especially when addressing the complexities of end-of-life care. Our goal is to provide holistic support, not only to your residents and their families but also to your team. By working closely together, we can foster an environment that promotes dignity, comfort, and peace for all involved.

Scott DeLong, MD
Associate Medical Director

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MYTH: If a person chooses hospice care they won't get other medical care.

FACT: While the hospice team will provide all aspects of care for the illness that qualifies the patient for hospice services, they are still free to seek treatment for unrelated illnesses or conditions. For example, if they are receiving hospice care for heart disease, they can still get treatment for a broken bone.

MYTH: Hospice requires a DNR (Do Not Resuscitate) Order.

FACT: The purpose and benefit of hospice care is to allow for a peaceful passing in a comfortable and familiar setting like home with loved ones near. While many people wish to have a DNR to avoid unnecessary medical intervention and hospitalization, they are not required to have a DNR to receive hospice care.

Supporting Bereaved Families During the Holidays

The holiday season can be particularly challenging for residents and families grieving the loss of a loved one. Whether the loss is recent or happened years ago, feelings of grief often resurface, making once-cherished traditions feel uncertain or even painful. It's important to know they are not alone in this experience.

PATHWAYS
CENTER for
GRIEF & LOSS
A program of Choices Healthcare

The bereavement counselors at the Pathways Center for Grief & Loss, a program of Hospice & Community Care, understand the unique challenges of the holiday season. This year, they are offering special Coping with the Holidays sessions designed to support both your residents and their families. These sessions provide compassionate guidance for finding comfort, establishing new traditions and honoring loved ones in meaningful ways. Open to everyone, these gatherings offer a supportive space to navigate this season with understanding and care.

For more information,
call (717) 391-2413 or visit www.pathwaysthroughgrief.org.

Signs Your Resident May Be Ready for Hospice Care

At Hospice & Community Care, we provide medical, emotional and spiritual support for individuals and families who are coping with a life-limiting illness. Hospice care focuses on comfort for individuals of all ages who have weeks or months rather than years to live.

Hospice & Community Care aims to help your team understand the complex changes that occur during the dying process. Referring a resident to hospice early in their disease process can offer additional comfort measures that enhance their quality of life. Patients and their families often say they wish they sought end-of-life care earlier in their journey.

The following are general signs and symptoms that indicate your resident may be ready for hospice care.

- Increased restlessness
- Withdrawing or lack of engagement
- Increased sleep
- Decreased intake
- Pauses in breathing
- Settling unfinished business
- New incontinence of bowel or bladder
- Increased swelling
- Increased fatigue
- Loss of appetite
- Sudden functional decline/PPS change
- Onset of extremity temperature changes
- Sudden escalation of pain or symptoms
- Change in med route – unable to take PO or discontinuing meds

To make a referral, please contact us at (844) 422-4031.

New Year, New Skills: Elevate Your End-of-Life Care with Our Hospice 101!

We are pleased to provide you with hospice orientation materials to train your staff on end-of-life care. As we approach a new year, consider setting resolutions focused on professional development in this compassionate field. This may include enhancing knowledge of regulatory compliance, improving communication with patients and families, or committing to continuous learning in end-of-life care. These goals can help shape a more fulfilling and impactful year.

If applicable, the materials also ensure regulatory compliance for your community and Hospice & Community Care in accordance with the Conditions of Participation (COP) from CMS. These sessions can be conducted by your training staff or by a member of the Hospice & Community Care team.



Scan to receive instructional materials.



Please contact Karen Stauffer, Community Educator, at (717) 490-4074 or kstauffer@hospicecommunity.org with questions or for additional details.

HOSPICE
& **COMMUNITY CARE**

A program of Choices Healthcare