

Palliative care places the patient front and centre

By [Jenni Noble](#)

18 May 2023

We need to acknowledge the undeniable truth that none of us are exempt from facing a terminal illness or the inevitable effects of aging.



Source: [Pexels](#)

Despite our optimism about the power of modern medicine to conquer all diseases, there comes a point when we need to confront the reality of our own mortality. Depending on an individual's stage in this mortal journey, crucial healthcare decisions must be made regarding preferred care options. At this juncture, people tend to focus on hospice care, but many fail to realise that palliative care is an option much sooner.

Palliative care is an approach that focuses on co-ordinating care, providing relief from symptoms, and improving the quality of life for individuals with serious illnesses.

“While palliative care is often associated with end-of-life or terminal care, it is increasingly recognised as beneficial at earlier stages of life-limiting illness, even when a person is not yet dying.

Palliative care can be administered alongside active treatments and is applicable at any stage of a life-limiting disease. It is frequently provided by an integrated multi-disciplinary team of healthcare workers, often including a nurse, social worker, and a doctor.

Optimising life experience

Palliative care places a strong emphasis on addressing the symptoms caused by the disease and its treatments. The goal is to enable individuals to engage in daily activities and experience the best possible quality of life. Unlike aggressive curative treatments, palliative care recognises the importance of optimising the overall life experience within the limitations imposed by illness.

In addition to managing symptoms, the emotional support provided by a palliative care team is vital. When facing a serious illness, patients and their loved ones are often overwhelmed.

Palliative care teams are specifically trained to communicate effectively, demonstrating compassion and empathy. They create a safe environment where individuals can openly express their fears, concerns, and emotions. The team actively listens to their needs and preferences, recognising the importance of providing a supportive space during this challenging journey.



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A palliative team can help individuals understand the different treatment options available, and initiate discussions about what matters most to them and what they would like to have happen when they cannot advocate for themselves. This process is grounded in shared decision-making, ensuring that a person's values and preferences guide medical interventions.

Reducing hospitalisations

By addressing symptoms, managing side-effects of treatment, and providing support, palliative care can facilitate the effectiveness of their medical treatments and interventions. Furthermore, a key goal of any palliative care team is to reduce hospitalisations and enable the patient to remain at home, surrounded by their loved ones, in a familiar environment.

Palliative care strives to minimise disruptions to life, allowing individuals to maintain their daily routine and activities.

In an environment of increasing technological advancements, patients face complex treatment choices, which are all too frequently only in the hands of the treating specialist. It's important that palliative care promote autonomy on their journey. This is good for the patient and the family – putting everyone at the centre of care decisions and improving quality of life for all involved.

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