

**BRIGGS**

UNDERSTANDING  
**PALLIATIVE  
CARE**

IMPROVED QUALITY OF LIFE  
AND DISCOMFORT MANAGEMENT

PATIENT  
EDUCATION  
GUIDE

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# Palliative Care Patient Education Guide

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**Purpose:** This booklet is for informational purposes only and is not designed to replace your physician’s advice or treatments. The information contained in this booklet may change, as practice guidelines change.

**Disclaimer:** We have attempted to make the information contained in this booklet as accurate as possible; however, Briggs Healthcare makes no guarantees as to its accuracy and assumes no liability for the use of its forms and publications.

**Research Resources:**

CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)

[www.cdc.gov/aging/pdf/state-aging-health-in-america-2013.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/aging/pdf/state-aging-health-in-america-2013.pdf)

[www.cdc.gov/tobacco/basic\\_information/health\\_effects/cancer](http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/basic_information/health_effects/cancer)

National Institute of Nursing Research

[www.ninr.nih.gov/newsandinformation/publications/palliative-care-brochure](http://www.ninr.nih.gov/newsandinformation/publications/palliative-care-brochure)

National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization [www.nhpco.org](http://www.nhpco.org)

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## Part I

### What is the definition of palliative care?



There are many definitions of palliative care. The differences depend upon the source of the definition.

The World Health Organization (WHO) says the following: “An approach that improves the quality of life of patients and their families facing the problem associated with life-threatening illness, through the prevention and relief of suffering by means of early identification and impeccable assessment and treatment of pain and other problems, physical, psychosocial, and spiritual”.

### The basic benefits of palliative care are:

- Palliative care improves quality of life (QOL) for patients and their family
- The palliative care team develops a plan of care to;
  - Relieve/prevent discomfort symptoms
  - Reduce stress from dealing with a serious illness
- Patients may continue to receive treatment that may cure their disease, while receiving palliative care services
- The palliative care team works in coordination with the medical providers and the medical treatments
- The palliative care team offers support and education to the patient and their family when they have to make important decisions



### What type of patient would benefit from palliative care?

Any person, child or adult, who has a severe chronic disease that causes daily discomfort can benefit from palliative care. The patient does not have to be actively dying to benefit from palliative treatment. In the past, people thought palliative care was only for hospice patients.

People can benefit from palliative care while they receive curative treatment for their disease. Others benefit even when their disease cannot be cured. Everyone has the right to a greater quality of life.

***Examples of serious chronic diseases that cause discomfort:***

- Congestive Heart Failure (CHF)
- Kidney failure
- HIV/AIDS
- Chronic genetic disorders
- Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD)
- Others
- Stroke
- Cancer
- Dementia



***Palliative care can benefit you at any point during your disease. Receiving palliative care does not depend upon whether or not your disease can be cured. The goal is to make you as comfortable as possible so you have a greater quality of life.***



**Is palliative care new?**

Palliative care is not new, but the need for palliative care is greater now than at any other time in history. That is because seniors or people who live to be 65 years and older are the fastest growing population in the world. Many of these people have daily discomfort from serious illnesses.

Over the next 25 years, the senior population in the US is expected to grow to approximately 72 million\* people. By 2030, seniors will account for 20% of the United States' population.



There are two main reasons for this rapid growth; people are living longer, and the Baby Boomers are reaching retirement age. Palliative care services are growing to meet this increasing need.

*\*This number may vary slightly, becoming higher, depending upon the source collecting the data.*

**What are palliative care services?**

Palliative care services are any medical treatments or social services that focus on relieving discomfort to improve the quality of life.

Palliative services do not offer curative treatments for the disease that causes the discomfort.

## How are palliative care services organized?

Palliative care services are patient centered. This means the professional team members join with the patient and persons the patient chooses to be involved in their care. Many patients include their family, friends, and non-professional caregivers. These people are the patient's social support team or SST. The professional team members consider the patient and their SST to be one unit.

The professional team members represent many specialties. For example, the team may include a social worker, dietitian, chaplain, nurse, doctor, and pharmacist. Professional team members join or leave the team throughout the patient's care based on the patient's needs.



For example, a dietitian may help in the beginning to set up a diet plan. Once the patient's diet is stable, the dietitian will be less involved. Example #2 – a social worker may help a parent find transportation to take their child to doctor's appointments. Once the transportation is arranged the family may not have another need for social work services.

At any time, new professional members may join the team or a member who has left the team may return depending upon the changing needs. The variety of specialties means the patient and their SST can be evaluated for changing medical, psychological, social, and spiritual needs.

### *Possible members of the entire palliative care team:*

- patient
- family members
- friends
- non-professional caregivers
- chaplains/spiritual leader
- doctors
- dietitians/nutritionists
- pharmacists
- social workers
- counselors
- nurses
- and others



## Where are palliative care services provided?

There are many healthcare providers across the United States that offer palliative care services. Hospitals, clinics, long-term care facilities, and home based programs are available.

If you or your family members are interested in this type of service, ask your primary medical doctor to set up a meeting/consultation with a palliative care provider in your area.



# This file is just a small sample of this booklet

## Our Patient Education Series offer:

- A simple solution for the education of individuals and family for common health conditions and issues
- A tool for smooth transitions between care settings
- Documentation tools to track compliance and record information (i.e., medications, appointments, diet)
- Guidance for lifestyle changes and other interventions to help with day-to-day management
- Large print and simplified language enhances readability and comprehension

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