



## The Benefits of Palliative Cancer Care.



Palliative care is also known as supportive care, comfort care, and symptom management.<sup>1</sup>

### WHAT IS PALLIATIVE CARE?

Palliative care is a whole-body form or treatment for patients with life-threatening or chronic diseases such as cancer. It helps both them and their loved ones cope with disease treatments such as chemotherapy while improving mood and quality of life. Where other medical treatments focus on beating the disease itself, palliative care is a complimentary form of care that deals with the emotional and spiritual side of disease treatment and focuses on alleviating pain and suffering.

Palliative care is provided through a team of medical professionals who work together with a patient's oncologist to provide a thorough treatment plan. Specialists typically include doctors, physicians, nurses, pharmacists, and nutritionists among other healthcare professionals.

In a recent study, cancer patients receiving palliative care lived approximately three months longer than those who did not.<sup>1</sup>

### WHEN IS PALLIATIVE CARE APPROPRIATE?

Unlike hospice care which is designed for patients who likely have six months or less to live, palliative care is for all stages of treatment for a serious illness—from initial diagnosis, throughout the course of treatment.<sup>2</sup>

Palliative care is appropriate for patients of all ages, and it continues on after a patient reaches a point where treatment to destroy the cancer is no longer necessary. At which point, it becomes the complete focus of care.<sup>2</sup>



## HOW CAN A PATIENT RECEIVE PALLIATIVE CARE?

Patients should talk to their doctor about getting palliative care. And the good news is, many private insurance companies and HMOs will cover the cost of palliative care, as well as some Medicare and Medicaid plans.<sup>2</sup>

### Types of Care

The four main issues addressed in palliative cancer care are:

- **Physical.** Many of the common symptoms that occur as a side effect of cancer treatments such as chemotherapy and radiation therapy include pain, lethargy, constipation, loss of appetite, nausea, vomiting, shortness of breath, and difficulty sleeping. These can often be relieved by medicines and alternative methods such as nutrition therapy, physical therapy or deep breathing techniques.<sup>1</sup>
- **Emotional and Coping.** Specialists in palliative care can assist patients and their families with the complex emotional issues associated with cancer diagnosis and treatment and carry on with daily life. Common topics addressed in treatment include depression, anxiety, and fear. Along with utilizing mental health professionals as a resource, palliative care for emotional coping can include family therapy sessions and support groups.<sup>1</sup>
- **Practical.** Concerns for cancer treatment patients also include everyday issues such as work, money, insurance coverage, and legal worries. To address these problems, palliative care teams can point patients in the right direction to receive financial counseling, comprehend complex medical forms and directives, and receive legal advice.<sup>1</sup>



- **Spiritual.** When cancer enters a person's life, both they and their families tend to look at spirituality differently, either in a more open manner in search of faith and comfort, or a more quizzical one—questioning their current spiritual values because of the cards they've been dealt. In either scenario, specialists in palliative care aid patients and family members in delving into these issues to help provide them with a sense of peace of mind and acceptance.<sup>1</sup>

Many studies that show patients are less able to adhere to their treatment and manage their illness and health when physical and emotional problems are present.<sup>1</sup>

Patients who receive palliative care consultations have lower hospital costs than those who don't. These consultations help determine treatment priorities therefore avoiding unnecessary tests and procedures.<sup>1</sup>

### HISTORY OF PALLIATIVE CARE

Up until the 20th century, medicine was used primarily for diagnosis, therefore the doctors of the time focused on offering palliation in place of cures. With the medical revolution, medical facilities and treatment specialists began their battle against diseases such as cancer, and hospitals became a place for cures instead of an environment to simply live out the course of an illness.<sup>3</sup>

### LOCAL CANCER SUPPORT GROUPS

For an extensive list of local support groups visit

[www.sierracancer.com/local-support](http://www.sierracancer.com/local-support)

Sources:

1 Palliative Care in Cancer, National Cancer Institute at the National Institutes of Health, Retrieved May 24, 2014, <http://www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/factsheet/Support/palliative-care>

2 Palliative Doctors, Retrieved May 24, 2014, <http://www.palliativedoctors.org>

3 Talk About Health, Retrieved May 1, 2014, <http://talkabouthealth.com/when-did-the-concept-of-palliative-care-begin-and-how-has-it-evolved-over-time>



### Sierra Nevada Cancer Center Locations

**Carson City**  
1460 S Curry Street, Suite 100  
Carson City, Nevada 89703

**Fallon**  
1020 New River Parkway  
Fallon, Nevada 89406

**Gardnerville**  
1107 Hwy 395  
Gardnerville, Nevada 89410

**Sparks**  
2345 E. Prater Way, Suite 102  
Sparks, Nevada 89434

**South Lake Tahoe**  
1154 Emerald Bay Road  
South Lake Tahoe, CA 96150

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