

Palliative Care Information Sheet

This information sheet arose from a discussion of palliative care at St. Basil's CWL meeting during the May 2018 National Hospice Palliative Care week. We hope that it will provide parishioners with some basic information about palliative care which is a priority of CWL National.

What is Palliative Care

Palliative Care is special health care designed for individuals and families living with terminal illness. Palliative care views death as a natural moment on the journey on our life journey. The goal of palliative care is to provide comfort and dignity for the person living with the illness and to achieve the best possible quality of life for this person and their family. Palliative care focuses on treating the impact that the illness has on patients and is often provided in addition to other care that focuses on treating the illness itself

Common myths include:

- **Myth:** Palliative Care hastens death. **Fact:** Palliative Care does not hasten death. It provides comfort and the best quality of life from diagnosis of an advanced illness until end of life.
- **Myth:** It is only for cancer patients. **Fact:** Palliative Care can benefit patients and their families from the time of diagnosis of any illness that may shorten life.
- **Myth:** Patients in palliative care who stop eating die from starvation. **Fact:** People with advanced illnesses don't experience hunger or thirst as healthy people do. People who stop eating die of their illness, not of starvation.
- **Myth:** Pain is part of dying. **Fact:** Pain is not always part of dying. If pain is experienced near end of life, there are many ways it can be alleviated

When should palliative be considered?

Palliative Care can be provided at any time, to anyone with advanced illness, regardless of age. It is often difficult to know when the time is right to actually become registered with a palliative care program. These are some signs that Palliative Care is right for your loved one:

- The patient has been diagnosed with a life limiting illness
- Pain and suffering have become increasingly difficult
- Frequent visit to the Emergency Unit are required
- The care giver is physically suffering and feels overwhelmed by responsibility

How can I access Palliative Care?

Access to Palliative Care is usually through your family doctor (primary health care provider) or in some cases through Champlain Local Health Integration Network (LHIN). (<https://www.champlainpalliative.ca>) 613 683-3779. You can also contact Hospice Association of Ontario (<https://www.hpco.ca>) (416)304-14770

What will Palliative Care Cost?

There is no cost to patients for medically necessary palliative care services in their homes, hospices, or hospitals. While residents of long-term care homes may pay a monthly fee to the LTC centre, these funds are a contribution to food and accommodation, not palliative care.

Where is Palliative Care provided?

Palliative Care is delivered wherever a patient lives –home, long-term care facility, hospice or hospital. The best place to receive care is usually the place that best matches the needs of the patient and family. Many people wish to be at home but this may become difficult. The family can become overwhelmed and may need the option to change to another facility. Sometimes the needs of the patient exceed what can be provided at home despite best efforts. Moving should not be seen as a failure. Palliative care aims to ensure that the best care is delivered regardless of setting.

What help is available for families who opt for Palliative Care at home?

There are supports and services available to help patients and families provide care at home. Publicly funded services include respite programs, home care programs, hospice volunteers and palliative care volunteers. Private companies can also provide care, but you will have to pay for these costs yourself unless you have insurance.

What Palliative Care Services are available in Ottawa?

The Ottawa Hospital, Queensway-Carleton Hospital and Elizabeth Bruyère Hospital provide hospital-based palliative care.

Several local retirement residences are well-equipped to provide palliative care.

Hospice Care Ottawa is a community based charitable, non profit organization which offers palliative and end-of-life care at no charge to individuals and their loved ones. The programs offered include day hospice, in home support and residential hospice care. Their facilities are May Court Hospice, Ruddy- Shenkman Hospice, La Maison de l'Est.

What is Advance Care Planning?

Advance care planning is a process that encourages patients, family members and health care providers to discuss the patient's health care wishes, in case there comes a time when the patient may not be able to make his or her own health care decisions. While Advance Care Planning conversations can be difficult, they help support patient-centered palliative care and help family and friends by taking away some of the stress that comes at an already emotional time.

Present and Future

The information presented here “sounds too good to be true”. And rightly so: the facts are true but there is a **major problem**. According to the Canadian Hospice Palliative Care Association, 70 to 80 percent of Canadians die without access to or do not receive palliative care and end of life care services. Palliative care is inadequately funded in the Ottawa region and in Ontario. It is recognized that more palliative care beds are needed now and in the future. There is also strong evidence that the lack of palliative care is influencing people to choose assisted death when they would have chosen palliative care had it been available. We must urge governments at all levels to improve access (funding) for good palliative care so that patients and their families can make the most of their time together before death. **How can we at St. Basil's do this?**

Information resources:

Canadian Hospice Palliative Care Association www.chpca.net 613 241-3663

Ontario Government Ministry of Health www.health.gov.on.ca 1-866-932-3161

Aging, Spirituality and Palliative Care by Rev. Elizabeth Mackinley, Routledge Press 2006, is one of many good books available.