

## The Importance of Palliative Care

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### DESCRIPTION

Palliative care is an interdisciplinary medical caregiving approach that aims to enhance life quality and relieve suffering in people with serious, complex, and often terminal illnesses. It contains numerous definitions of palliative care. Palliative care is appropriate for people of all ages who have serious illnesses, and it can be provided as the primary goal of care or in conjunction with curative treatment. An interdisciplinary team of physicians, nurses, occupational and physical therapists, psychologists, social workers, chaplains, and dietitians provide it. Palliative care can be delivered in a variety of settings, including hospitals, outpatient clinics, skilled nursing facilities, and homes. Palliative care, while an important component of end-of-life care, is not limited to those nearing the end of their lives. Evidence suggests that a palliative care approach can improve a person's quality of life. The primary goal of palliative care is to improve the quality of life for people suffering from chronic illnesses. Palliative care is typically provided at the end of life, but it can be beneficial for anyone at any stage of a critical illness or at any age.

Through pain and symptom management, identification and support of carer needs, and care coordination, the overall goal of palliative care is to improve the quality of life of individuals with serious illness, defined as any life-threatening condition that either reduces an individual's daily function or quality of life or increases carer burden. Palliative care can be provided at any stage of illness alongside other curative or life-prolonging treatments, and it is not limited to people receiving end-of-life care. Palliative care services were historically focused on people with incurable cancer, but this framework is now being applied to other diseases such as severe heart failure, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, and multiple sclerosis and other neurodegenerative conditions.

### Practice

**Symptom assessment:** The Edmonton Symptom Assessment Scale (ESAS) is a palliative care instrument that consists of eight

Visual Analogue Scales (VAS) ranging from 0 to 10, indicating levels of pain, activity, nausea, depression, anxiety, and sometimes shortness of breath. A score of 0 indicates that the symptom does not exist, while a score of 10 indicates the worst possible severity. The patient, with or without assistance, or nurses and relatives, can complete the instrument.

**Interventions:** Palliative care medications may be common medications used for a different indication based on established practices with varying degrees of evidence. Antipsychotic medications are used to treat nausea, anticonvulsants to treat pain, and morphine to treat dyspnea. Because many people in palliative care lose the ability to swallow, administration routes may differ from acute or chronic care.

Subcutaneous administration is a popular alternative route of administration because it is less traumatic and easier to maintain than intravenous medications. Family members or nursing staff frequently administer medications at home. Palliative care interventions in nursing homes may help to reduce discomfort for residents with dementia and improve family members' perceptions of the quality of care. However, more high-quality research is required to back up the benefits of these interventions for the elderly dying in these facilities. At a one-month follow-up, high-certainty evidence supports the finding that implementing home-based end-of-life care programmes may increase the number of adults who die at home and slightly improve patient satisfaction. The impact of home-based end-of-life care on carers, healthcare personnel, and health-care costs is unknown.

**Pain, distress, and anxiety:** End-of-life care can cause emotional and psychological distress for many patients, adding to their overall suffering. An interdisciplinary palliative care team comprised of a mental health professional, social worker, counsellor, and spiritual support such as a chaplain can play important roles in assisting people and their families in coping by addressing their needs through various methods such as counselling, visualization, cognitive methods, drug therapy, and relaxation therapy.

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