



California Hospice Foundation

How Can Palliative Care Help?

As a friend of the California Hospice Foundation, you are familiar with hospice care. But there is an important medical term that you may not have heard of: **Palliative Care** (pronounced PAH-LEE-UH-TIVE). “Palliate” means to make comfortable by treating a person’s symptoms resulting from a serious illness. Hospice is one form of palliative care that many Americans have heard of.

Both hospice and palliative care focus on helping a person be comfortable by addressing issues causing physical or emotional pain, or suffering. Hospice and other palliative care providers have teams of people working together to provide care. The goals of palliative care are to improve the quality of a seriously ill person’s life and to support that person and their family during and after treatment.

For more than thirty years, hospice programs have been caring for people at the end of life. Hospice serves more than 1.5 million patients and their family caregivers each year. Hospices are the largest providers of palliative care services in the county. However, this very same approach to care is being used by other healthcare providers, including teams in hospitals, nursing facilities and home health agencies, in combination with other medical treatments, to help people who are seriously ill.

Hospice focuses on relieving symptoms and supporting patients with a life expectancy of months not years, and their families. Palliative care may be given at any time during a person’s illness, from diagnosis on. Under hospice care, a patient focuses on comfort care and quality of life. Under palliative care, a patient may continue with other treatments being provided by his or her doctor.

Caring Connections, a program of the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization has prepared a list of questions and answers about the difference between hospice and palliative care that are available online: <http://www.caringinfo.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=3355>.